

January
February
2009

Seasons

Brattleboro Area Hospice
Bereavement Newsletter



Sometimes Reflection Helps, Sometimes Activity



Janus, the Roman God for whom January is named, has two faces: one looks backward while the other faces forward. The month of January, like its namesake, is a good time for pausing to remember and reflect on what has been and to consider what yet may be. Check out suggested activities on pages 2 & 3 and consider participating in a support group or coming, alone or with a friend, teen or child, to a Second Saturday session.

Occurring within the first two months of the year are New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Valentine's Day, President's Day and Winter Vacation. During this same period any number of personally "special" days may also occur, such as birthdays and anniversaries. When those closely connected to us have died, we are likely to recall ways we spent time with them on these particular days in the past. A variety of feelings may arise, from sadness and anger to poignancy and rejoicing in the life of that person. Allow for differences in behavior among family members. As we are all unique beings, we will find our own unique ways to remember and mourn the passing of a loved one, to come to terms with any difficulties in those relationships, and to celebrate those lives and relationships that nurtured us.

It's possible to transform our "e-motions" through shared activities and putting our bodies in motion. Snowshoeing or snowboarding, working out at the gym, ice fishing with a buddy, are a few of the activities that

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A long time I have lived with you
And now we must be going
Separately to be together.
Perhaps I shall be the wind to blur your smooth waters
So that you do not see my face too much.
Perhaps I shall be the star to guide your uncertain wings
So that you have direction in the night.
Perhaps I shall be the fire to separate your thoughts
So that you do not give up.
Perhaps I shall be the rain to open up the earth
So that your seed may fall.
Perhaps I shall be the snow to let your blossoms sleep
So that you may bloom in spring.
Perhaps I shall be the stream to play a song on the rock
So that you are not alone.
Perhaps I shall be a new mountain
So that you always have a home.

~ Nancy Wood (from *Earth Prayers*, Edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon)

Creative Responses to Grief

Putting picture albums in order or writing down thoughts and feelings can give focus to the “betwixt and between” state we find ourselves in while grieving.

Writing a letter to a loved one who has died is one way to sort through our feelings and memories. Anne Brener in Mourning and Mitzvah: A Guided Journal for Walking the Mourner’s Path Through Grief to Healing suggests “It might be helpful to look at a picture of the deceased before writing the letter. Allow yourself to absorb the image and the feelings the picture generates within you. If you already know what needs to be said, just begin writing.” If not, she offers many partial sentences to complete of which the following are only a few.

In losing you I feel that I have lost
The biggest surprise has been.....
The hardest thing has been
I am most grateful for

In Part Of Me Died, Too: Stories Of Creative Survival Among Bereaved Children And Teenagers, author Virginia Fry says, “When change and loss come into our lives and take some of our dreams away, it is important to create new hopes and wishes.” She suggests writing a “Fears and Hopes” poem that answers the questions “What are you afraid might happen?” and “How can you stay hopeful when you are scared?”

Speaking Truth, Accepting Help

“I don’t suppose it’s ever easy,” Delores said. “For me, the hardest thing was not to turn bitter. At first, there’s all this attention, casseroles and pies and cards and phone calls. But then it’s just you, and it starts to sink in, all that you’ve lost. Funny, for the longest time it seemed like I was surprised that it didn’t *all* go away, that Carson didn’t come walking back in the door saying, ‘Well, sweetheart, that was a real good job you did on my funeral, now what’s for dinner?’ But they don’t come back and they don’t come back and it takes a toll. You can get mad. And then you can take it out on the whole world. I’ve seen that happen often enough. But the alternative is...well, you can speak the truth and shame the devil. You can tell people you need a little help and then let yourself take what people offer—even though it’s hard to do! It is *hard* to do! And you can let yourself be gentle, which takes a lot of strength.”

From *The Year of Pleasures*, Elizabeth Berg

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many find both invigorating and comforting. Some choose to remember their loved ones by lighting a candle, visiting a grave and leaving a rose in the snow, giving a gift or performing some commemorative act to honor a loved one. These holidays may then take on new meanings, while honoring what has been.

If it would be helpful to talk out feelings and ideas about how to spend these “special” days, call Elizabeth or Melissa (257-0775). And however you choose to care for yourself or for family and friends, please remember to be gentle with yourselves.

~Elizabeth E. Pittman
Bereavement Care Coordinator

Bereavement Support Activities

Bereavement Support Groups offer a safe, mutually supportive environment in which to share stories and experiences and explore the changes in our lives due to loss and grief. Groups are free of charge and meet at our 191 Canal Street office. Please call Elizabeth, Jennifer, or Melissa at 257-0775 to register, make an appointment or for further information.

Bereaved Parents Support Group meets 6:30-8 pm, the 2nd & 4th Thursdays of each month, January 15 & 29 and February 12 & 26. Facilitated by Lynn Martin.

***NEW *Three-Week Session for Survivors after A Traumatic Loss** (for example, work-related or car accidents; suicide; homicide) for 5-8 people. We will meet from **5:15-6:45 pm Thursday, January 29, February 5 & 12, if there is sufficient interest.** Extra meetings beyond the three scheduled is possible, upon request. RSVP to Elizabeth Pittman, facilitator, 257-0775 x 104.

***NEW *Parent or Sibling Loss Support Group** will meet Mondays, 5:30 - 7 pm, given sufficient interest. Start date TBA.

Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group meets from 4:30-6:00 pm, the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays of each month, January 14 & 28 and February 11 & 25. Facilitated by Cheryl Richards,

Individual and family support is also available with trained bereavement volunteers and staff. Please call Elizabeth or Melissa for more information, an appointment, or just a listening ear.

Good Grief Program for Children and Teens

BAH makes six to eight-week support groups available, whenever 4 - 6 close-in-age, grieving children or teens request it. We use a range of activities – drawing, sculpture, collage, photography, writing, movement and music – to explore feelings, share memories, and design and create mementos. Facilitated by Elizabeth Ungerleider. Call Elizabeth Pittman at 257-0775 x104 for information.

“Second Saturdays” For all Ages: Children, Teens, Adults

**The second Saturday of every other month at the Hospice office, 191 Canal Street
January 10th, 10 am to 12 noon (Snow date: January 17th, 10am to noon)**

The Second Saturdays’ program provides an opportunity to socialize over an art activity with other individuals and families who have experienced the death of a loved one. You, your friends and family members of all ages are invited to join us for these informal gatherings. Drawing, collage and other materials are provided.

January 10. Memory Boxes. Boxes and a range of materials (fabric, collage, paint) will be provided but you may want to bring mementoes or copies of your loved one’s picture or handwriting to put on or in the box you’re creating. Elizabeth Ungerleider will facilitate.



For further information or to register, call Elizabeth Pittman, 257-0775 x 104. **Drop-ins are welcomed. Refreshments will be served.** Reading or writing in our library is always an option during this time.

Brattleboro Area Hospice
Bereavement Program
191 Canal Street
Brattleboro, Vermont 05301

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Seasons Mailing List

To add or remove a name, please call
or email Jennifer.



Hospice Lending Library

The Library includes over 650 books, tapes and videos, for all ages, including the titles cited in these pages. New releases are added often. Please visit our library, located in the Hospice office at 191 Canal Street, during office hours (weekdays, 8:30-4:30) and borrow anything you find interesting or helpful.

Winter is a good time for relaxing and replenishing ourselves. Remember to find small ways ~ from popping popcorn to singing in the shower or taking a nap ~ in which to care for and be gentle with yourself.



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