

September
October
2010

Seasons

Brattleboro Area Hospice
Bereavement Newsletter



CROSS-CULTURAL RITUALS OF MOURNING AND REMEMBRANCE

Five summers ago I traveled to Oklahoma City and visited the imposing, reflective and moving Memorial built to honor those who died in the 1995 bombing. With September 11 approaching, I'm reminded of the variety of persons and families affected by these tragedies. The diversity of these populations is reflected in the varied cultural, religious, familial, and personal rituals used for remembering and mourning loved ones who have died.

Several books available from our hospice lending library address the ways people of different backgrounds acknowledge and grieve the death of someone close. *Diversity and End-of-Life Care*, was edited by Kenneth Doka and Amy Tucci for the Hospice Foundation of America's Living With Grief series. *Knowing My Neighbor: Religious Beliefs & Cultural Traditions at Times of Illness & Death* by the Council of Churches of Greater Springfield, Massachusetts and the Visiting Nurse Hospice of Pioneer Valley offers a synopsis of religious and ethnic customs related to illness, death and mourning. Some religions and cultures prescribe ways of behaving when a death occurs, on the anniversary of a loved one's death, and at other times during or after the first year.

In the Jewish community, burial occurs as soon as possible after a death, followed by a seven-day period called *Shivah*. **“Why do we sit shivah for seven days? Because the world was made in seven days and each person is a world, a world that never was before and that will never be again.”** The anniversary of a death is called *Yahrzeit*, marked by lighting a special candle, saying a particular prayer (*Kaddish*), and performing good deeds to honor the loved one's memory. ~from *Wrestling with the Angel: Jewish Insights on Death and Mourning* edited by Jack Riemer.

“Many Vietnamese people...practice a formal grieving period. For seven weeks after the death of a loved one, people in mourning invite the soul of the deceased into their homes. Every seventh day they cook a special meal for the loved one and burn incense. Also customary for some people of Vietnamese descent is a visit to the grave 100 days after the death of the loved one.” ~from *Living with Grief, Who We Are, How We Grieve* edited by Kenneth Doka and Joyce Davidson.

In Japan, traditionally, observation of the anniversary of a death, or *meinichi*, serves a similar function to Western celebrations of birthdays. “The primary function of the remembrance of a relative's death day is...more often an opportunity for reaffirming the family solidarity of the living. Rather than the living being drawn momentarily closer to the world of the dead...the dead are temporarily returned to the realm of the living. Significantly, the work *meinichi* is written with two ideographs meaning “life” and “day”. And in a sense, the remembrance of death days is indeed an affirmation of life...” ~from *Discover Japan Volume 1, Words, Customs and Concepts*.

~Elizabeth Pittman, Bereavement Care Coordinator



Hospice Lending Library

The Library at our 191 Canal Street office has a collection of over 650 books, CDs, DVDs, and audio or videotapes for all ages. Browse and borrow during office hours Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm. Books quoted in this issue are available for checkout.

From Elizabeth ~

A number of years ago I attended a weekend retreat entitled “Healing Grief” at Genesis Spiritual Life and Conference Center in Westfield, MA. (www.genesiscenter.us) I especially liked the retreat title because it can be read in two ways. The first refers to healing the pain of grief, something I am frequently asked how to do. A less expected interpretation would be to experience grief itself as healing. Thus, in some sense, allowing oneself and others to grieve in one’s own time and way provides one answer to “How do I heal the pain of this grief?”

Many people fear that, by experiencing, acknowledging, and expressing their feelings, they will “start crying and never stop” or wallow in their grief and never find their way out. It is important to remember that all of life operates rhythmically, in cycles. This is as true of our grieving as it is of the tides going in and out, day alternating with night, and the seasons changing in turn. If you find yourself stuck in only one way of feeling or behaving, please call and we will help you or will give you an appropriate referral.

There are many safe ways for children, teens, and adults to experience and release sadness, anger, guilt and other challenging emotions. With the increased activity that fall can bring, now is a good time to reflect on what you can do to calm, center and “feel at home” in yourself. Does singing, alone or with others, or listening to your Ipod help? Perhaps hiking, dancing, playing volleyball or simply hammering nails provides a comforting release of energy. For some, keeping a journal, prayer or meditation, reading or texting friends helps them feel more peaceful. Some choose to harness powerful emotions in the service of creating a garden, story, poem or work of art. We thank bereavement volunteer, Cielle Tewksbury for allowing us to use her poem (*page 3*) written in memory of her late husband Henry Tewksbury.

Many grieving people take solace in talking with others who are “in the same boat”. Our support groups provide a place for the discussion of “where I’ve been, where I am now and where might I be going.” [*See information on page 3*] If figuring out what might be most helpful seems too tiring and confusing to tackle alone, please call me or Winnie at 257-0775.



Good Grief Program for Children and Teens

Could you, or a child or adolescent you know, benefit from an expressive arts support group?

Using a range of activities- drawing, sculpture, collage, photography, writing, movement and music– participants find safe, creative ways to explore questions, thoughts and feelings while meeting others their age that have experienced the death of a significant person. If four or more children from the same school are interested, groups can be offered there; group meetings are also held at the hospice office. Elizabeth Ungerleider facilitates these free-of-charge sessions. Interested? Have questions? Call Elizabeth Pittman at 257-0775 x 104 or Winnie at x108

**The Good Grief Program for Children 8-10 years old
meets monthly on the third Wednesday, 4-5 pm, September 15 & October 20, 2010**



Elizabeth Ungerleider will facilitate this free-of-charge session to be held at our 191 Canal Street office. To register or for further information, call Elizabeth Ungerleider at 258-0763 or Elizabeth Pittman at 257-0775 x104.

Bereavement Support Activities

Bereavement Support Groups offer a safe, mutually supportive environment for sharing experiences, feelings, insight and encouragement through discussion, handouts, and suggestions for writing. Groups are free of charge and meet at our 191 Canal Street office. Please call Elizabeth, Shirley, or Winnie at 257-0775 to make a pre-group meeting appointment, to register, or for further information.

A Grief Support Group for Adults, 5:30-7pm, Tuesdays, September 21 to October 26, if there is sufficient interest. This 6-week discussion and writing group for adults whose parent, sibling, friend or other cared-for person has died, facilitated by Elizabeth Pittman.

The following groups meet year-round though dates shown are for current 2 month periods

Bereaved Parents Support Group meets 6:30-8 pm, the 2nd & 4th Monday of each month, September 13 & 27 and October 11 & 25, facilitated by Lynn Martin.

Suicide Loss Support Group meets from 5-6:30 pm, the 1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month, September 1 & 15 and October 6 & 20, facilitated by Andrea Edwards. This group is co-sponsored by The Samaritans, Inc. www.samaritansnh.org

Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group meets from 5-6:30 pm, the 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month, September 8 & 22 and October 13 & 27, facilitated by Cheryl Richards.

A Social Gathering, for current and former S/PL members, is being organized by Mary Lou Buchanan at the Riverview Restaurant, Wednesday, September 29 at 6 PM. Mary Lou asks that people RSVP "so we don't arrive en masse and do give the wait staff time to set up tables if need be." Contact Mary Lou at 254-4253 or manciab@comcast.net.

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

Loss

I do not come to terms with loss.
I am not reconciled.
There is no table across which I will bargain,
no closure, no compromise,
no one will moderate this feast of loss.
To deny the ache that racks the soul
is to diminish its depth.
I carry loss with passion.
It is a wild richness in my life.
What has slipped through my fingers
teaches me to love what my hands still hold.



*Cielle Tewksbury, Bereavement Volunteer
Submitted in loving memory of her husband, Henry Tewksbury*

The Hospice Memorial Garden

You are invited to stop, reflect, and enjoy this community garden on the side of Living Memorial Park across from 150 Guilford Street. If you would like to plant bulbs, chrysanthemums, or other flowering plants this fall in memory of a loved one and label or decorate an accompanying stone as a memorial, please call Winnie at 257-0775 for help with placement. Plantings provide truly a living memorial while making our garden brighter and more colorful next spring and in the years to come.

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 Shirley.

Art Helps the Heart For All Ages, 10:30 am to 12 noon, Saturday, October 23, at the Hospice office, 191 Canal Street

The **Art Helps the Heart** 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. Materials including paints and collage materials are provided; RSVP so we'll have enough on hand. There is always an option to read or write in our library during this time. **Drop-ins are welcomed. Refreshments will be served.**

October 23, Mixed Media Creations for "Day of the Dead" Altar. Come decorate a mask or a picture frame to take home or to add to our November 5th Day of the Dead altar. Materials will be provided but you may want to bring copies of your loved one's picture or handwriting. Elizabeth Ungerleider and Elizabeth Pittman will facilitate.

Coming in November

BAH will be sponsoring the **Sixth Annual Celebration of Dia de los Muertos, Day of the Dead on Friday, November 5, Gallery Walk Night.** There will be music, traditional snacks, and the placing of mementos on a community altar at **Experienced Goods.** Look for details in the next issue of *SEASONS*.

Elizabeth Evans Pittman, Bereavement Care Coordinator
Winnie Ganshaw, Bereavement Volunteer Coordinator
Elizabeth Ungerleider, Youth Program Coordinator
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