



GRIEF SUPPORT AND CONNECTIONS FOR YOUR JOURNEY

Sea shell ceremony gives care team closure

Members of the Coastal Hospice Fair Winds team gathered on the dunes on the Ocean City beach on a gray day, the waves crashing behind them. Holding sea shells in their hands, they recited names, one by one. The list was long. The moment, moving and profound.

361 names were read, each belonging to a patient who had passed away in the last year while being cared for by the Fair Winds team. The team holds this service every year to remember their patients and acknowledge the sadness they themselves feel at each loss.

The team of doctors, nurses, certified nursing assistants, social workers, counselors, and volunteers that serves Worcester and Somerset counties meets every week at their headquarters in Berlin to discuss each patient individually. They put their skills together to decide on the best course of care for the patient and their family.

When a patient passes, the team grieves. They share fond



Fair Winds team members honor their patients in June's Sea Shell Ceremony on the Ocean City beach

stories about the patient, and also write the patient's name on a sea shell that is placed in a silver tray filled with sand.

Once a year, the team takes the sea shells to the beach in Ocean City, where they honor each patient by returning the shells to the churning waves, completing the full circle of life.

Continued on Page 2

Grief is about feelings ... and coping with change



Our life changes whenever we experience a loss. Sometimes the changes are major. We may miss the daily presence of someone who has long shared our life. All our routines, our rhythms of life, may now be different.

Dr. William Worden of the Harvard Medical School who has conducted studies on bereavement writes a task of grief is "to adjust to a world in which our loved one is no longer present." What was normal before our loss will never be "normal" again. What we used to do together — whether eating, walking, or watching television — we now do alone. Responsibilities our loved one carried are now ours to fulfill. Activities that once held meaning may now seem insignificant.

While changes are inevitable, they are not uncontrollable. We still retain choice, even in change. The first step is to assess change. What are the ways that life has changed? Are any of these changes truly problematic? Should some be reversed? Do others need to be accepted?

For example, some changes may negatively affect our health. We may no longer eat properly or exercise. After all, it can seem too burdensome to cook for one or exercise without the encouragement of others. Knowing that eating right, getting plenty of rest and exercise are good for us may help us move through our grief in a healthy way. It may be important to explore creative alternatives to the healthy activities we enjoyed in the past.

The good news is that, while change is inevitable, how we respond is our choice. We may be able to decide whether to move or not. Or choose when or whether to return to work.

A guideline is helpful here. Grief is highly stressful; therefore, as much as possible, we should control the pace of change. We may find less stress if we delay those major changes in our life for a period of time. Some changes must be accepted. Some are concrete and irreversible. Death and loss will invariably bring changes in their wake, but the secret to managing change is an old one best expressed in the Serenity Prayer.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."



We all need a parachute

Charles Plumb was a U.S. Navy jet pilot who served in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, Plumb's plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Though Plumb ejected in time, he parachuted into enemy hands and spent the next six years in a Communist Vietnamese prison. Plumb survived the ordeal and today lectures on life lessons learned from that experience.

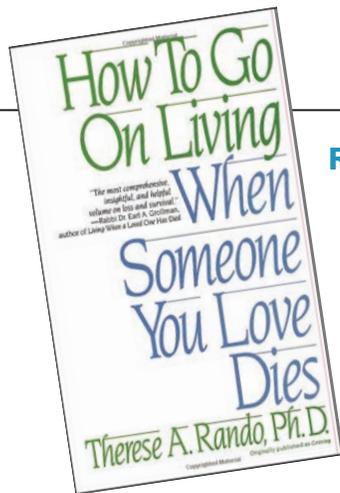
Not long ago, when Plumb and his wife were in a restaurant, a man at another table approached and gleefully declared, "I know you! You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!"

Surprised by the encounter, Plumb asked curiously, "How did you know that?" The man responded, "I packed your parachute."

Plumb stayed awake that night, thinking about the sailor who had spent long hours in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each parachute, holding in his hands the fate of someone he didn't know.

Plumb points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory - he needed a physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual parachute. He relied on all these supports before reaching safety.

It's easy to become so enmeshed in your own challenges on this grief journey that you fail to recognize and acknowledge those who in the past and who presently help "pack your parachute." Stop today and give thanks to that person or persons who give and serve in unselfish ways to ensure your safety and well-being. Remember there are people ready to help you, even if you don't see them there.



RECOMMENDED READING

"How To Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies"

by *Therese A. Rando*

Mourning the death of a loved one is a difficult process. But whether the death is sudden or anticipated, few of us are prepared for it or for the grief it brings. There is no right or wrong way to grieve; each person's response to loss is different.

In this compassionate guide, Therese A. Rando, Ph.D., bereavement specialist, leads you gently through the painful but necessary process of grieving and helps you find the best way for yourself.

Dr. Rando has been a lecturer and guest for several events hosted and co-hosted by Coastal Hospice, and we highly recommend her book to you as a further means of connection on your grief journey.

Sea shell ceremony *continued from Page 1*

Bereavement counselor Bob Miller said, "We are thankful for the opportunity to share the gifts and talents we have to bring comfort and support to those who have been entrusted to us. As we release the sea shells, we release them back to the sea as we move forward to assist others. We are grateful to have met them and remember the impact they have had on our lives."

Jocelyn Fielder, nurse and team leader, said the team deeply cares for every patient and feels a profound loss when they pass. The team needs closure, too.

"We don't often get to attend the services held by their families. By having our own sea shell ceremony on the beach, each member of our care team is able to bring closure to the passing of their individual patients."

"The sea shell ceremony allows us to acknowledge the wonderful patients we have," Janyce Adams, certified nursing assistant, said. "Our own grief is relieved with this ceremony. We can let it go, too. We don't get a chance to go back and visit the families as we'd like to."



When a patient of the Fair Winds team passes, their nurse writes their name on a sea shell and places it in a silver tray. The shells are taken to the beach once a year for the annual Sea Shell ceremony.

MEET YOUR GRIEF SUPPORT COUNSELORS

Miller leads grief support groups on Lower Eastern Shore

Bob Miller considers himself as much a life coach as a grief support counselor, running the support groups that meet regularly in Ocean Pines, Salisbury, and Crisfield.

"I enjoy helping people work through the aspects of grief," he said. "Working through life's difficult happenings is imperative to good health - mind, body, and spirit."

Miller knows recovering from grief is hard work, because he's been through the painful experience himself.

"I, too, have had to work through great losses in my life. I find, in most cases, the process works better in a group atmosphere. Having a coach to challenge, encourage, and believe in you while you do the work is extremely helpful. I believe part of my calling in life is to lovingly help people by being that coach."

Born and raised in Salisbury, Bob has been with Coastal Hospice since 2013, where he offers counseling and spiritual support to people of

diverse faiths and backgrounds. In addition to leading the support groups, he educates healthcare workers and the community on the complexity of grief.

Bob is also currently Senior Pastor at Bethesda United Methodist Church in Salisbury.

Before joining Coastal Hospice, he was the resident chaplain at the Einstein Healthcare Network in Philadelphia; adjunct professor at Cecil College in Elkton; proprietor of Tingle Investments in Salisbury; senior pastor/headmaster of Central Worship Center in Laurel; and senior pastor at United Methodist Church, Peninsula-Delaware Conference.

Bob received his Masters of Divinity degree from Eastern University, Palmer Theological Seminary in St. David, Pa., and his BA in psychology from Lee University in Cleveland, Tenn.



Bob Miller, Grief Support Counselor

Grief Q & A



Q. It's been nearly eight months since my husband of 36 years passed away. My daughter is telling me that I should be getting out more and "enjoying life," but I just don't feel that I'm ready yet. I feel such sadness. I feel tired much of the time, and all I want to do is stay home. Is my daughter right? Should I make myself get out and socialize even if I don't feel ready?

A. The grief process is highly personal, especially timing. The truth is we never "get over" the loss of a loved one, but, with time, we can heal from our loss and eventually even find that we can enjoy life again. Your daughter's concern that you reengage in life is most likely based on her own grieving process. She may have moved through her grief differently and may feel guilty that she's able to be happy while you're still trying to cope. Talking with your daughter about your feelings may be helpful. You might also find it helpful to talk with a professional grief counselor or join a grief support group to help you find the tools you need to cope.

Q. My mom lost her fight against breast cancer last month. It was an long struggle. In the end, I dropped out of college to help care for her. My problem is that lately I haven't felt sad in the way I think I should. I actually feel more relieved. It seems like I must be the worst daughter in the world to feel that when I should be grieving her loss.

A. When it comes to grieving, there is no wrong or right way. Each of us is unique, and our path through grief is also. Even though it's been a short time since your mom's death, you were likely experiencing much of the grieving process during the eight years battling the disease.

Relief is actually a very common response to a loved one's death, especially following an extended and perhaps painful illness. The fact that you put your own life on hold to help care for your mother suggests that you also lost a part of your own life. Your current range of grief and emotions will likely be influenced by how you choose to move forward with your own life. A bereavement counselor or a grief support group may be able to help you talk through your emotions and offer insight to your loss.

Q. When my seven year-old's grandfather, whom he adored, died six months ago, he barely cried. We talked with him through the process about why Gramps had to leave us, and he even attended the services. At the time, he seemed to take it all in stride. But then last month we lost our beautiful golden retriever, and my son broke down. He was inconsolable for days, and now just seems sullen and angry. What should we do?

A. Your son should see a bereavement counselor experienced in working with children immediately. What you describe sounds like a case of grief transference. It's likely that the reaction your son is having to the loss of a pet, while real and significant, is probably also tied into the earlier loss of his grandfather. The fact that he is expressing his grief with anger, impatience and meanness towards his little sister suggests that he needs some assistance in processing his feelings in a way that is healthy and nurturing.



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TO OPT OUT: You are likely receiving this publication following the death of a family member, friend or loved one who received care from Coastal Hospice. Grief support is a vital part of the hospice philosophy of care. This publication serves to share information you can use during this time and highlight upcoming events. If you do not wish to continue receiving this publication or have a change of address, please contact Melissa Dasher at 410-742-8732, ext. 621 or mdasher@coastalhospice.org.

UPCOMING GRIEF SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

Dorchester County

Evening Support Group – Dorchester County
Library, 303 Gay St., Cambridge
Mondays: July 10, July 17 at 6 p.m.
Tuesdays: August 22 and August 29 at 6 p.m.
Information ~ Elmer Davis 410-726-2583

Worcester County

Lunch Social Group – all at 1 p.m.
July 20 - Ocean City Fish Company,
12817 Harbour Rd, West Ocean City
August 17 - Crab Alley, 9703 Golf Course Rd,
West Ocean City
RSVP ~ Diana Pikulsky 410-641-6566

Support Group – Ocean Pines Library,
11107 Cathell Rd., Ocean Pines,
Every Thursday at 11 am.
Information ~ Bob Miller 410-251-8163

These groups provide a time of respite and a safe place to express feelings in the grieving process. We offer these activities at no cost to any adult who has experienced the death of a loved one, even if they were not a patient of Coastal Hospice. For information, call **410-742-8732**.

Somerset County

Support Group – Somerset County Library,
100 Collins St., Crisfield
Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday at 11 a.m. (No meeting July 4)
Information ~ Bob Miller 410-251-8163

Wicomico County

Lunch Social Group – all at 1 p.m.
July 12 - Fratelli's, 925 Snow Hill Rd., Salisbury
July 26 - Brew River, 502 W. Main St., Salisbury
August 9 - Ruby Tuesday, 413 N. Fruitland Blvd., Salisbury
August 23 - Bob Evans, 2601 N. Salisbury Blvd., Salisbury
RSVP ~ Lynette Chase 410-901-2292

Support Group – MAC Center, 909 Progress Circle., Salisbury
Every Friday at 1 p.m.
(Evening group cancelled for summer. Returning in September.)
Information ~ Bob Miller 410-251-8163

NOTE: All lunch socials are "Dutch treat."