



GRIEF SUPPORT AND CONNECTIONS FOR YOUR JOURNEY

## Coping with grief and loneliness over the holidays



How will I get through the next few weeks?

*What is happening to me? I have always loved this time of year; now I'm miserable.*

Would I be better off ignoring the holidays this year?

*How long am I going to feel this way?*

Should I just try to act normal so I don't ruin the holidays for anyone else?

*Should we change our holiday traditions?*

And the list of questions you have goes on . . .

This year, your holidays will be different, but they can still be meaningful. In the midst of your pain, you can experience hope.

Here are a few things to remember:

You don't have to pretend that this year will be like others.

The energy you would spend evading the issue can be used more wisely to plan for a different kind of holiday.

In reality, few holidays are as picture perfect as those portrayed on TV. So give yourself permission to feel what you feel. You will be advised to cheer up, join the festivities, get with the program. That's pretty hard to do when you feel sad, depressed, anxious, fatigued, angry, apathetic, guilty, or confused.

These feelings are normal. They're a sign you have cared deeply about someone. Acknowledging your feelings is one thing, but expressing them in healthy ways is an important next step to take.

Do what works best for you. It might be a long hard cry, taking a walk in the woods, talking to someone about your loved one, or starting a new tradition in their honor. Overeating and over-indulging in alcohol may seem like helpful escapes during a season of parties, but they won't help.

Perhaps the most practical advice we can offer is to plan ahead. Think about what the most difficult situations will be and prepare for them. What concerns you most? What do you want others to understand about how you are feeling? What can other people do to help you? What can they refrain from doing? What can you do to help others? Give yourself the freedom to change plans, but don't be blindsided by situations you've tried to avoid.

Take advantage of opportunities for support. Coastal Hospice offers some important opportunities to help you prepare for the holiday season. In November, our support groups will, among other issues, discuss coping with the holidays. We will provide practical tips within a group of supportive people who are on the same grief journey.

### Upcoming healing event

We invite you and your family to honor the life of your loved one by attending a

**Memorial Service on**

**Wednesday, Nov. 8 at 1 p.m.**

**J. Millard Tawes Museum**

**3 9th St. Crisfield**

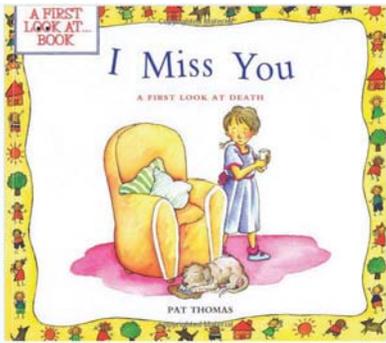
**Light refreshments will be served.**



Our memorial services are special times for hospice families and friends to gather to remember and honor their loved ones. Joining with others to honor those we've lost is an important part of the healing process.

The services are free, and we welcome anyone who would like to attend, not only Coastal Hospice families. For more information, please call Melissa Dasher at 410-742-8732 or 443-944-5846.

## RECOMMENDED READING



### *“I Miss You ~ A First Look at Death”* by Pat Thomas

When a close friend or family member dies, it can be difficult for children to express their feelings. This book helps boys and girls understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have following a loved one’s passing.

Titles in this sensitively presented series explore the dynamics of various relationships experienced by children of preschool through early school age. Children are encouraged to understand personal feelings and social problems as a first step in dealing with them.

Written by psychotherapist and counselor Pat Thomas, the book promotes positive interaction among children, parents, and teachers. The story lines are simple and direct, easily accessible to younger children. There are full-color illustrations on every page.

Recommended by Coastal Hospice Bereavement Counselors, this book is the perfect gift to share with young children in your family at the holidays.

## *The parable of the mustard seed*



There lived a woman named Kisa Gotami. She married young and gave birth to a son. One day, the baby fell sick and died soon after. Kisa Gotami loved her son greatly and refused to believe that her son was dead. She carried the body of her son around her village, asking if there was anyone who can bring her son back to life.

The villagers all saw that the son was already dead, and there was nothing that could be done. They advised her to accept his death and make arrangements for his burial.

In great grief, she fell upon her knees and clutched her son’s body close to her own. She kept uttering for her son to wake up.

A village elder took pity on her and suggested she consult a miracle worker who lived nearby. Kisa Gotami was extremely excited upon hearing the elder’s words. She immediately went to the miracle worker’s residence and pleaded for him to bring her son back to life.

“Kisa Gotami, I have a way to bring your son back to life,” he said. “My Lord, I will do anything to bring my son back,” Kisa replied. “If that is the case, then I need you to find me something. Bring me a mustard seed but it must be taken from a house where no one residing in the house has ever lost a family member. Bring this seed back to me, and your son will come back to life.”

Having great faith in the miracle worker’s promise, Kisa went from house to house, trying to find a mustard seed. At the first house, a young woman offered to give her some mustard seeds. But when Kisa asked if she had ever lost a family member to death, the young women said her grandmother had just died a few months prior. Kisa thanked the young woman and explained why the mustard seeds did not fulfill the requirements.

She moved on to the second house. Regrettably, a husband had died there a few years earlier. The third house had suffered the death of a sister, and the fourth house, the death of a father. She kept moving from house to house, but the answer was all the same – every house had suffered the death of a family member.

Kisa Gotami finally came to realize that there is no one in the world who had never lost a family member to death. She now understood that death is inevitable and a natural part of life.

Putting aside her grief, Kisa buried her son in the forest. She then returned to the village aiding others who had endured the death of someone close.

Many individuals will have at least one empty chair at the table this holiday. Find a way to support someone else in need. If not directly, consider volunteering at a soup kitchen, helping out at your local animal shelter, or asking someone you know who is alone to share the day with you. Plant the smallest seed in the life of someone else in need – and together watch great things grow. By helping others, you keep the memory of that someone special you’ve lost alive in your own heart.

## MEET YOUR BEREAVEMENT COUNSELORS

### *Sean Alvarado joins us to serve Dorchester County*

Coastal Hospice welcomes Sean Alvarado as our new bereavement counselor.

Born and raised in Trinidad, Sean moved to Washington, D.C. where he graduated from Dunbar High School. Recruited to play basketball for Hutchinson Community College, one of the top community colleges in the state, he later played basketball for Kansas University where he was part of the national championship team in 1988.

Sean played basketball overseas for a number of years until an injury sidelined his career. He then coached on the collegiate level for three years with his last coaching job at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

Sean became interested in behavioral work in high school, which sparked him to pursue a master's degree in school counseling at Wilmington University. After counseling for several years on the high school level, he left to work with children and families in the field of mental health.

"I thought that I should gain experiences in the field of addiction, child and adolescent

therapy, as well as family therapy," Sean said. "I worked for a number of years at Eastern Shore Psychological Services in Salisbury conducting forensic therapy and working closely with the court system to assist in rehabilitative services for individuals returning to the community from the criminal system."

Grief counseling was the logical and emotional next step for the counselor.

"What brought me to hospice was the increase of patients I was seeing on a daily basis who were struggling with unresolved grief issues and long term bereavement issues," he said. "I wanted to get a closer and more in-depth experience in grief counseling.

"Working at Coastal Hospice has been an eye-opener for me. I enjoy working with the Dorchester bereavement team. It has been a privilege for me to be a part of this organization as well as a privilege to serve the families during their time of grief," Sean concluded.



*Sean Alvarado, bereavement counselor*



*Volunteer Anna Jarvis uses her sewing skills to repair donated clothing at the Coastal Hospice Thrift Shop in Berlin.*

## *Volunteering can be a way through grief*

As part of the services we provide, Coastal Hospice offers volunteer support to patients and their families in hospice care and following the patients' death. Coastal Hospice also seeks volunteers for other areas of need, including the We Honor Veterans program, the Berlin Thrift Shop, bereavement support, and pet therapy.

An informational and training session for anyone wanting to learn about volunteer opportunities at Coastal Hospice will be held on:

**Wednesday, Oct. 25 from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. at the Coastal Hospice Volunteer Services Office, Philmore Commons, corner of U.S. Bus. 50 and Phillip Morris Dr. in Salisbury.**

No commitment to volunteer is required, and the public is invited to the free session.

There are many ways to volunteer for Coastal Hospice throughout the area the nonprofit serves: Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester counties. Patient care volunteers provide basic comfort and companionship to patients and their families at home; in nursing and assisted living facilities; and at the inpatient facility, Coastal Hospice at the Lake. Bereavement volunteers provide emotional support and assistance during the 13-month period following the hospice patient's death. Administrative support volunteers assist staff at Coastal Hospice at the Lake and the Berlin and Salisbury offices. Thrift shop volunteers provide support for the store in Berlin. Volunteers who are veterans themselves have opportunities to interact with veteran patients as part of the We Honor Veterans program.

Coastal Hospice depends on their volunteers to provide the quality care every patient needs and deserves. The volunteer coordinator will work with individuals to match their interests to opportunities.

"We are always looking for volunteers who want to make a difference, and there are many ways you can help," Sally Rankin, volunteer coordinator for Coastal Hospice, said. "We have a particular need for volunteers to help with pet therapy visits. We can work within your schedule and where you live, and give you the skills you'll need to be a hospice volunteer."

Early registration is strongly encouraged. To register for training or to receive more information, call **Volunteer Services at 410-742-8732** or email [volservices@coastalhospice.org](mailto:volservices@coastalhospice.org).



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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](mailto:mdasher@coastalhospice.org).

## UPCOMING GRIEF SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

### Dorchester County

**Support Group** – Dorchester Co. Library,  
303 Gay St., Cambridge  
Mondays at 6 p.m.: Nov. 6 & 20; Dec. 4 & 18  
*Information ~ Sean Alvarado 443-859-1312*

### Worcester County

**Lunch Social Group** – all at 1 p.m.  
Nov. 16 - The Globe, 12 Broad St., Berlin  
Dec. 21 - Lighthouse Sound, 12723 St. Martins  
Neck Rd., Bishopville  
*RSVP ~ Diana Pikulsky 410-641-6566*

**Support Group** – Ocean Pines Library,  
11107 Cathell Rd., Ocean Pines  
Every Thursday at 11 am.  
*Information ~ Nicole Long 443-614-6142*

**NOTE:** All lunch socials are "Dutch treat."

These groups provide a time of respite and a safe place to express feelings in the grieving process. Support groups are free to any adult who has experienced the death of a loved one, even if they were not a patient of Coastal Hospice. Lunch socials are Dutch treat. For information, call **410-742-8732**.

### Wicomico County

**Lunch Social Group** – all at 1 p.m.  
Nov. 8 - Fratelli's, 925 Snow Hill Rd., Salisbury  
Nov. 22 - Brew River, 503 W. Main St., Salisbury  
Dec. 13 - Ruby Tuesday, 413 N. Fruitland Blvd., Salisbury  
Dec. 27 - 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.  
*Information ~ Bob Miller 410-251-8163*

### Somerset County

**Support Group** – Somerset Co. Library,  
100 Collins St., Crisfield  
Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday at 11 a.m.  
*Information ~ Nicole Long 443-614-6142*

**Memorial Service** – J. Millard Tawes Museum,  
3 9th St., Crisfield  
Wednesday, Nov. 8 at 1 p.m.  
*RSVP ~ Melissa Dasher 443-944-5846*