



GRIEF SUPPORT AND CONNECTIONS FOR YOUR JOURNEY

## The five steps towards healing

Every human being experiences loss at some point in life, yet some losses impact us more than others. While loss and the accompanying grief are part of our human journey, they can be disruptive and create an overwhelming sense of sadness, loneliness and fear. The reminders below can assist you through the grieving process.

### STEP 1

Remember there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Some people outwardly express grief, while others are private. Some people want a lot of support and comfort while others need to grieve alone. Grief takes as long as it takes. There are no time limits on how long one “should” grieve. Each person’s sadness and re-orientation to life after loss is different. No one should tell someone else, “Get over it, you have been sad long enough.”

### STEP 2

Grief “comes in waves and hides in pockets.” One moment a person may feel fine and happy, and the next moment they are overwhelmed by sadness and frustration at their loss. Unexpected waves of emotion may be confusing to those around a person who is grieving. They may start crying for no apparent reason. This is a normal part of the grieving process. The waves of sadness do get further apart and less intense over time, but for a long while they may seem to just appear.

### STEP 3

The shortest way to the other side of grief is through it. A person who tries to suppress their sadness about a loss will eventually have to deal with the anger, sadness and unfairness of the loss. You can delay your grief, but you cannot avoid it. The more unresolved and suppressed grief is, the more a person’s life will be emotionally restricted, and their grief will come out in



unconscious ways at those around them. It is important to honor and acknowledge grief and loss and the accompanying feelings so these feelings are not slipping out at unwanted times at others, or turned inward and causing physical distress.

### STEP 4

Spend time with long-time friends and relatives who care. Continuity in life is important. Being able to relive memories, reconnect with the past and have a sense that you are not all alone is important.

### STEP 5

Take advantage of the support resources available through Coastal Hospice’s Grief Support Program. We offer memorial celebrations, support groups, socials, and special opportunities. Please check the calendar on page 4 for more information. These events are also on our website at [www.coastalhospice.org](http://www.coastalhospice.org).

## “The Natural Order of Things: Navigating the Death of a Parent”

By Howard Travers, Bereavement Care Manager



Sunday, May 13, 2018 is Mother’s Day in the United States. It celebrates motherhood and it is a time to appreciate mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, stepmothers, foster mothers and mother figures. In the days and weeks before Mother’s Day, many schools help their pupils to prepare a handmade card or small gift for their mothers.

Father’s Day is also just around the corner. Sunday, June 17, 2018, is celebrated worldwide to recognize the contribution that fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, stepfathers, foster fathers, father figures and even other male relatives make to the lives of their children. This day celebrates fatherhood and male parenting.

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## A summer grief camp for kids ages 6 - 12 who have lost a loved one

Camp Safe Harbor is a safe, loving place for children to heal. This three-day summer day camp is filled with fun activities, help, hope, healing and love, and open to children ages 6 to 12 who reside on the Lower Shore.

The camp creates unique opportunities for each child to heal in his or her own way through play and fun activities. They'll join other children who have experienced a similar loss with opportunity to share their grief stories with each other.

The camp counselors are experienced in providing grief support, and include bereavement counselors, chaplains and social workers from Coastal Hospice, and students and staff from Salisbury University. The counselor-to-camper ratio is high and encourages, one-on-one interaction.

**Location:** Salisbury University Teacher Education & Technology Center on US Route 13, Salisbury

**Opening Night Family Party:** Monday, June 25, 6 p.m.

**Camp Days:** Tuesday, June 26 - Thursday, June 28, 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**Family Closing Ceremony:** A Time to Remember:

Thursday, June 28, 4 - 5 p.m.

The camp is limited to 30 children, so please reserve your spot by calling 410-742-8732 Ext. 619



## Open communication is key to helping children cope with loss

The death of a family member or close family friend can be a traumatic experience for a child. Preschool children may be unable to comprehend the permanence of death, often expecting the loved one's return. Preteens and teenagers may withdraw and have trouble communicating their sorrow – and even anger – over the death. Parents and other adult family members may be so consumed by their own loss that they're not available to truly "be there" for the grieving child.

Long-term denial of the death by a child or avoidance of grief is unhealthy and can later surface in more severe problems.

Children will watch parents and other adults for guidance on how to cope. If a parent is able to grieve openly, express their sadness and talk lovingly about the deceased, the child will often do the same. Encouraging children to freely express their sadness and talk about their loss can be keys to a healthy recovery.

Following the death of a loved one, it is typical for children to move between moments of joyful carefree play and sadness. It's important, especially during this period, for surviving adults to take time to talk with the child and let them know that it's okay to express their feelings over the loss.

When the loss is a family member — particularly a parent or sibling — children will often react in anger. The anger may be revealed in boisterous play, nightmares, irritability or a variety of other behaviors. Often the child will show anger towards the surviving family members.

When a parent has died, often the child will revert to acting younger than they are. They may use "baby talk" and be demanding, especially for cuddling or attention. It's common for younger children to believe that they are the cause of what happens around



Grief counselor Bob Miller discusses feelings with a group at 2016's Camp Safe Harbor, a grief camp for children held every summer

them. A young child may believe a parent, grandparent, brother or sister died because he or she had once "wished" the person dead. The child feels guilty because the wish "came true."

Some danger signals to watch for:

- An extended period of depression in which the child loses interest in daily activities and events.
- Inability to sleep, loss of appetite, or prolonged fear of being alone.
- Acting much younger for an extended period.
- Excessively imitating the dead person.
- Repeated statements of wanting to join the dead person.
- Withdrawal from friends.
- Sharp drop in school performance or refusal to attend school.

## Navigating Death of Parent

*Continued from Page 1*

If you recently suffered the death of either your mother or father or both parents, Mother's Day and/or Father's Day may invoke many grief-related feelings for you.

After all, the death of a parent is the single most common form of bereavement in the United States. Yet, it is the most thoroughly neglected and overlooked of all losses. Many people say that a parent's death is one of the hardest things they have ever dealt with in their life. Even when the parent had been ill beforehand, the ensuing grief can include a variety of emotions: sadness over the loss; relief at the ending of the parent's suffering; anxiety because a kind of "protection against death" symbolized by a parent is gone; and memories, painful as well as comforting. After all, the death of a parent typically represents the loss of a long-term relationship characterized by nurturing and unconditional support. Parents are often described as "always being there when the chips are down, no matter what."

While our parents are alive, they often represent a source of moral support. There is often a sense that, if real trouble comes, we can call on one or both of our parents. The death of the last surviving parent often leads to a consequent role change. You no longer have a parent to fall back on. That sense of security is gone. There is no longer anyone who might be willing to answer your call for help unconditionally. The death of a last surviving parent can also represent the loss of heritage. Adjusting to the death of one or both parents can involve both holding on and letting go, as we simultaneously recognize the reality of death and treasure comforting memories of him or her.

Perhaps because of a mother's traditional role as the primary nurturing caregiver, many people believe that the death of a mother is harder to cope with than the death of a father. Another factor may be the fact that, statistically, fathers tend to die before mothers. Thus, a mother's death often represents the loss of having parents.

When a relationship has been dysfunctional, a parent's death ends the hope of creating a better, more functional parent-child bond. The death of a parent can also strain a marriage, especially if you feel that your partner is not offering as much emotional support as needed or expected or does not understand the impact of your loss.

What people say to you after your parent's death is one sign of this widely held neglect. "He lived a full life," they say, as if that fullness somehow fills your own emptiness. Or else they ask, "How's your mother taking it?" but ask nothing about how you feel. Later, if your grief lasts longer than friends or relatives find comfortable, they point out, "Of course it's sad, but don't parents typically die before their children? Isn't that just the natural cycle?" These various condolences are well intentioned. It's not as if people purposefully neglect your grief. Rather, they just don't consider it to be significant. The unstated message is that when a parent is middle-aged or elderly, the death is somehow less of a loss than other losses. The message is that grief for a dead parent isn't entirely appropriate.

Consciously or not, you hear these messages. Willingly or not, you pay attention to them. You may even end up believing them. The result is that you probably neglect your own grief. If you are a midlife adult, your mother or father's death is an important sym-

bolic event. It may initiate a period of upheaval and transition. Most people report that the death of a parent changes their outlook on life, often spurring them on to examine their lives more closely, to begin changing what they don't like, and to appreciate more fully their ongoing relationships.

Any death reminds us of our own mortality, but your mother or father's death may cause you to realize, perhaps for the first time, that you have become an adult. Thus, the death of one or both of your parents can result in a "developmental push," which may lead to a more mature stance in which you no longer think of yourself as a child.

Here are a few suggestions for coping with the death of a parent:

1. Don't expect to be ready for the natural order of things; you won't be.
2. Never let anyone belittle your loss, make you feel guilty for grieving deeply, or hurry you through your grief. You are entitled to feel all of grief's intricacies and all of grief's intensity.
3. Grieving for a parent, like all grief, can be exhausting emotionally, physically and spiritually. Be kind to yourself.
4. This work of grief takes time; the process must not be hurried. And it is never entirely over.
5. Even as an adult, don't be surprised by feelings of abandonment and uncertainty that you experience.
6. After they are gone your parents will continue to be a part of your life, just in a different sense. You will always be their son or daughter.
7. Grief does not end. Rather grief comes and goes. And then it comes again.

Coastal Hospice & Palliative Care invites you and your family to honor the life of your loved one by attending a **Memorial Service.**

We look forward to seeing you and sharing together this time of remembrance.

**Friday, May 11**

1 p.m.

Carousel Resort Hotel  
11700 Coastal Highway  
Ocean City, MD

**Wednesday, May 16**

3 p.m.

Elks Lodge #1272  
5463 Elk Lodge Road  
Cambridge, MD

RSVP: 443-944-5846

Light refreshments will be served.



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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

**Evening Support Group** – Dorchester County Library, 303 Gay St., Cambridge

All meetings on Monday at 3p.m.

May 14, June 4, June 18

Information ~ Marceline Brooks 443-859-1312

### Worcester County

**Lunch Social Group** – all at 1 p.m.

May 17 - BJ's on the Water, 115 75th St., Ocean City

June 21 - Sunset Grille, 12933 Sunset Ave., 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 ~ Nicole Long 443-614-6142

### Somerset County

**Support Group** – Somerset County Library, 100 Collins St., Crisfield

Every 1st and 3rd Tuesday at 11 a.m.

May 1, May 15, June 5, June 19

Information ~ Nicole Long 443-614-6142

### Wicomico County

**Lunch Social Group** – all at 1 p.m.

May 9 - Adam's Taphouse Grille, 219 N. Fruitland Blvd., Fruitland

May 23 - Denny's, 100 East Cedar Lane, Fruitland

June 13 - Dayton's, 909 Snow Hill Rd., Salisbury

June 27 - Delmar Pizza, 38660 Sussex Highway, Delmar, DE

RSVP ~ Melissa Dasher 443-944-5846

**Support Group** – The MAC Center, 909 Progress Circle., Salisbury

Every Friday at 1 p.m.

Information ~ Nicole Long 443-614-6142

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.

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