

January
February
2011

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.

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. Check out Support Activities on pages 3 & 4 and consider participating in a support group or coming, alone or with a friend, teen or child, to the Art Helps the Heart session.

One way to transform our "e-motions" is 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 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 special or ordinary times, call Elizabeth or Winnie (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

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

The Ice Storm of 2008

by Teresa Storti, submitted in loving memory of her husband David

"I think you're going to die fairly soon," the doctor said to David, and that was when the horrors began for real.

When I told my sister of my husband's prognosis in that April of 2008, she shared with me a dream she had wherein a woman was struggling to find her way through an ice storm. "I see now that it was you," she said.

An ice storm was an apt description of the feelings of isolation, helplessness and desperation that accompanied my husband's declining health. Try as I might to fight it off and somehow protect him, there was a mightier force at work that was not to be conquered by either of us or the many medical personnel who became involved in our struggle. All I could do to help him was to try to be there, advocate for him and love him.

Then, in the midst of my denial of what was happening to us both, in December of 2008, when he was in dire condition and being hospitalized in Keene, the big ice storm hit our home in Halifax, VT. I found myself completely on my own without power or phone amidst downed trees and power lines. This actual ice storm literally isolated me from all human contact. I had no choice but to acknowledge it. And I survived. I saw it as a kind of spiritual preparation – as a symbol of the grief yet to come. It was clear to me that I would make it through. No matter how frightening and grim circumstances may become, I would muster the strength to weather the storm ahead of me.

As I was struggling with grief soon after my husband's death, I happened to receive an email with a tag line – yet another message about a storm. Reading it, it struck me that there are choices to be made as I move along my path of grief. That phrase is now affixed below my computer screen so that I can see it every day, and I share it here:

"LIFE isn't about how to survive the STORM... but LEARNING how to dance in the rain!"

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



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, 10am-5pm. Books quoted in this issue are available for checkout.

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?"

Bereavement Support Activities

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, Winnie or Shirley at 257-0775 to make an appointment or for further information.

A Grief Support Group for Adults, Thursdays, 5:30-7pm, if there is sufficient interest. A writing and discussion group facilitated by Elizabeth Pittman and Winnie Ganshaw for adults whose parent, sibling, friend or other cared-for person has died. This 8-week series will meet [in two 4-week blocks] January 27-February 17 and March 10 – 31, [taking February 24 & March 3 off.] **Call Elizabeth or Winnie to register.**

ONGOING YEAR-ROUND GROUPS Showing Dates For Current 2 Month Period

Suicide Loss Support Group meets from 5:30-7 pm. **Note: meetings resume on the third Wednesday, January 19** and continue on the 1st & 3rd Wednesday February 2 & 16, facilitated by Andrea Edwards. This group co-sponsored by The Samaritans, Inc. www.samaritansnh.org

Bereaved Parents Support Group meets 6:30-8:00 pm, the 2nd & 4th Monday of each month, January 10 & 24 and February 14 & 28, facilitated by Lynn Martin.

Spouse/Partner Loss Support Group meets from 5-6:30 pm, the 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month, January 12 & 26 and February 9 & 23, facilitated by Cheryl Richards.

Social Gathering, for current and former **Spouse/Partner Loss members**, Friday, January 21, 6pm, Potluck at Mary Lou Buchanan's House, 70 Terrace Street, weather permitting. "Please RSVP as to what you plan on bringing, I will supply beverages, eating utensils and dinnerware." 254-4253 or e-mail manciab@comcast.net. Thanks, Mary Lou

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.

The 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 with others their age that have experienced the death of a significant person. Groups can be offered in schools where four or more children are interested; group meetings are also held at the hospice office. Elizabeth Ungerleider facilitates these free-of-charge sessions and can be contacted at 258-0763 or call Elizabeth Pittman at 257-0775 x104. **Note: A wintertime teen group is being formed at BUHS. In March, a group for school age children will be held at our office.**

Web Articles by Liana Lowenstein for Parents Supporting Grieving Children and Teens

Tips for Explaining Death to Children http://www.lianalowenstein.com/talking_to_children_about_death.pdf

How Bereaved Children Think, Feel, And Behave, And What Adults Can Do To Help
http://www.lianalowenstein.com/articleBereaved_children.pdf

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

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Brattleboro, VT
Permit # 109

Return Service Requested

Seasons Mailing List

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

FOR ALL AGES

Art Helps the Heart



At Experienced Goods Home Furnishings, 51 Elliot Street
Saturday, January 29, 10:30 am to 12 noon
(Snow date: February 5, 10:30am to noon)



MAKE-A-VALENTINE! Create a commemorative valentine to hang on the Remembrance Tree at our 51 Elliot Street Experienced Goods Home Furnishings shop or to take home. Materials will be provided but you may want to bring copies of your loved one's picture.

The Art Helps the Heart program provides an opportunity for you to socialize over an art activity with other individuals and families who are coping with the death of a loved one. Materials are provided; We appreciate **RSVPs** to Shirley at 257-0775, but drop-ins are welcomed. **Refreshments will be served.** Elizabeth Ungerleider and Elizabeth Pittman will facilitate.

Elizabeth Evans Pittman, Bereavement Care Coordinator
Winnie Ganshaw, Bereavement Volunteer Coordinator
Elizabeth Ungerleider, Youth Program Coordinator
Brattleboro Area Hospice 191 Canal Street, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301 (802) 257-0775
www.brattleborohospice.org brattleborohospice@myfairpoint.net