



# JOURNEYS

A newsletter to help with grief

Spring 2017 | Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care

## The First Anniversary

by Kate Buster MSW, Grief Support Volunteer

"No rule book.  
No time frame.  
No judgement.  
Grief is as  
individual as a  
fingerprint.  
Do what is  
right for your  
soul."

-Michelle Steinke

**Y**ou've spent almost 12 months working through your grief and now, in the weeks leading up to the anniversary of your loved one's death, you may find unwelcome emotions coming up. You may be anxious or even depressed about how to manage that day.

Some prefer to pass this anniversary quietly, perhaps going through old photos and remembering better times. Others may want to go to their place of worship or the cemetery. Or, you could plan a family gathering to honor your missing loved one by sharing stories and memories.

Ritual can be a healing part of grief, a way to honor missing loved ones in years to come. Rituals can range from simply lighting a candle to an annual family event or dinner at your loved one's favorite restaurant. Involving family and friends in planning can help honor their loss as well.

Remember, there's no right or wrong way to spend the day, and no right or wrong reaction to it. Listen to your heart. Make plans that feel like they'll work for you. Remind yourself that you've made it this far and you'll make it through this day, too. You may find anticipation is more stressful than the day itself.

While 12 months isn't a magic number, anniversaries

can be important milestones. It's the ending of the first year of loss and you've somehow made it through all those sad "firsts" — the holidays, birthdays and anniversaries.

You're a survivor, moving into the second year after a significant loss. It may feel impossible that it's been that long. Time has a strange way of dragging through heart-breaking hours and days, but flying through months.

Well-meaning friends and family may give you the message, either spoken or unspoken, that it's time to "move on." Without realizing it, you may even be putting this pressure on yourself. You might feel angry and abandoned.

Talking it through with trusted friends can be helpful. Or, you might try journaling to help work through these feelings.

At this time, you may remember important events, like when you first heard the diagnosis, going to the hospital, starting hospice or the last time you went out to dinner together. Remembering these events can be very painful, but can also bring healing.

This first anniversary of your loved one's death is time to acknowledge your loss, but also give yourself credit for the progress and growth

you've made. Seeing progress when you're living it daily is difficult. Remember how you felt those first weeks? Can you see that the intensity of your pain has lessened?

Maybe the rough days are fewer. Have you begun to let some painful memories of illness and death fade, to be replaced by those of happier times? Are you better able to focus and operate in the world? Are you able to see the new skills you've learned and recognize how well you've managed this past year? This is all progress and growth.

This second year marks yet another new period in your life. For some, this anniversary may be a time for exploring possibilities. Would you like to renew any past interests, hobbies, or friendships you were unable to continue during your loved one's illness? Or try something new entirely?

Grief may still be a strong factor and healing may feel very slow. Remember, we all grieve in our own way and in our own time. You have done the best you can, and you'll continue to heal. Progress may be difficult to see, but it's there. Be kind to yourself. Reach out to others. Give yourself credit for where you've been and where you are now, moving forward the best way you know how.



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# Surviving Survivor's Guilt

By Shari Scott MA, LPC, NCC  
Grief Support Specialist

As if grieving the death of someone you loved so dearly isn't enough, in many situations we find ourselves engulfed in endless questioning of our last moments with them.

We rehearse conversations we were unable to have, and fret over things we didn't really mean to say. Or better yet, we blame ourselves for actions we failed to take.

Somehow, we believe, had we done or said something differently, our loved one would still be here with us.

A very common theme in both group and individual settings is "how do I get over the guilt?"

For starters, understand that many people experience survivor's guilt to some degree. Truth is, very few find their loved one's death to be "ideal." The time, place, or situation in which their loved one's life ended should have been different.

It will likely take some work over time to abandon the "shoulds" in situations like this so give yourself some grace.

Also know that survivor's guilt is often our way of trying to control a situation which we cannot. Have faith that over time the intensity of survivor's guilt subsides and you will better be able to utilize logic about your loved one's death.



## Remember a Loved One at the Circle of Lights



You are invited to attend the annual Circle of Lights memorial event at 8:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 23, to remember loved ones. The ceremony takes place at the J.C. Nichols Fountain on the Country Club Plaza, 47th Street between Main and Broadway. Luminary bags bearing the names of people being remembered line the sidewalks. The evening includes a nondenominational ceremony, and the lighting of the luminaries. This outdoor event may be cancelled for inclement weather. Please call if rain is forecasted.

To participate, please complete the form below and mail to **KCH, 1500 Meadow Lake Parkway, Suite 200, KCMO 64114**. You may also respond online at [www.kchospice.org/col](http://www.kchospice.org/col). If you are unable to attend, the luminary will be lit in your absence. We ask that luminary requests arrive by Monday, April 24.

*I would like to order a luminary.*

My luminary is in honor of:

\_\_\_\_\_

Please call 816.363.2600 if you have any questions.  
We ask that luminary requests arrive by Monday, April 24.

Mail to: KCH, 1500 Meadow Lake Parkway, Suite 200  
Kansas City, MO 64114 or online at [www.kchospice.org/col](http://www.kchospice.org/col)

My Name \_\_\_\_\_

My Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

# The Importance of Rituals

By Jean Smart LCSW  
Grief Support Specialist



In J. William Worden's hallmark book, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, he provides four tasks to help mourners. His final task is "to find an enduring connection with your loved one while moving forward with life."

We can't change the fact that our loved one is gone, but we do have a choice in how we respond. We can choose to heal.

Rituals are an important way to help you keep your loved one alive. A ritual is a specific behavior or activity that gives symbolic expression to your feelings. Rituals can be a one-time occurrence or repeated annually at a time of your choosing. They can help you interact with the memory of a loved one in a healthy way.

Rituals help us create continuing bonds with our deceased loved ones. There is no need to sever all connections with the person

who has been a part of your life. Contemplate and determine which parts of your life and relationship with your loved one can be retained.

Rituals may be as simple as watching a movie you both liked or playing "your song". They can be religious in nature, or collecting photographs, mementos and personal belongings to place in a memory box.

This can also be an important tool to help children grieve, as once they have placed articles in the box they can add to it, or use it to reminisce. It can be something shared with the whole family too.

Other more tangible ways to create rituals could be:

- ▶ Give a donation in your loved one's name
- ▶ Light a candle
- ▶ Create a memory table
- ▶ Make their favorite recipe or meal, and then make a toast in their memory
- ▶ Share memories of your loved one, read a poem or say a prayer
- ▶ Plant a tree
- ▶ Bake cookies for a nursing home or others who may be isolated
- ▶ If visiting a cemetery, consider including children in planning decorations to give them a sense of involvement

The Circle of Lights by Kansas City Hospice was created to help you celebrate your loved one in community. Research has shown that even when a loss is not our own, we ache. Grief expressed in community connects us to the core of being human. Grief shared is grief diminished.

May tender  
memories soften  
your grief,  
May fond  
recollection bring  
you relief,  
And may you find  
comfort and peace  
in the thought  
of the joy that  
knowing your loved  
one brought...  
For time and space  
can never divide  
Or keep your loved  
one from your side.  
When memory  
paints  
in colors true,  
the happy hours  
that belonged  
to you.

-Helen Steiner Rice



# Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care

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[kchospice.org](http://kchospice.org)

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## Support Group Schedule

**K**ansas City Hospice offers grief support groups and workshops. Groups are designed for adults at least two or three months past their loss.

There's no charge to attend groups, but registration is required. Registration may close when a group is full, or be cancelled because of low registration.

For questions or to register, please call Grief Support Services **816.363.2600.**

### **Cooking for One**

Two nights, March 14-15, 6-8 pm. Suggested donation \$10, Kansas City Hospice House™, 12000 Wornall. Register by March 6.

### **Life After Loss**

Every Thursday for six weeks beginning March 23, 2:30 - 4 pm, NorthCare Team Office, 2000 NE Vivion Rd, Ste. 200. Register by March 16.

### **The Grief Journey Begins**

Every Monday for five weeks, beginning April 3, 6 to 7:30 pm, Kansas City Hospice Main Office. Register by March 28.

### **Monthly Drop-In Support Group**

1st Tuesday each month, 3 to 4:30 pm, First Presbyterian Church, 1625 NW O'Brien Rd, Lee's Summit. Register by Friday prior.

### **Camp Erin**

A weekend, overnight camp for teens and children grieving the death of someone close. June 10 to 12. [kchcamps.org](http://kchcamps.org)

### **Spouse/Partner Loss**

Every Tuesday for five weeks beginning July 11, 3:30 - 5 pm, First Presbyterian Church, 1625 NW O'Brien Rd, Lee's Summit. Register by July 5.

### **Camp Carousel**

A weekend retreat camp for grieving families with school-aged children and teens. September 23 to 25. [kchcamps.org](http://kchcamps.org)

## Additional Grief Resources



Solace House  
Center for Grief and Healing  
913.341.0318  
[solacehouse.org](http://solacehouse.org)

**SkillBuilders - Education and Support for Widows, Widowers and Caregivers**  
913.648.1520

**Grief Support Network**  
[griefsupportnetwork.org](http://griefsupportnetwork.org)

### Visit Us Online

[kchospice.org/grief/](http://kchospice.org/grief/)  
Learn about our services, resources, previous issues of *Journeys* and more.

### Signup for Email

[kchospice.org/email-signup/](http://kchospice.org/email-signup/)  
Choose areas of interest & receive *Journeys* by email.