



# JOURNEYS

A newsletter to help with grief

Spring 2018 | Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care

## Bursts of Memory

by Jacque Amweg, Grief Support Specialist

"What is lovely  
never dies,  
but passes  
into another  
loveliness,  
star-dust or  
sea-foam,  
flower or  
winged air."

- Thomas Bailey Aldrich

This morning when I walked outside my front door and smelled the cool air, a memory popped into my mind. I was instantly taken to my grandparents back yard, the narrow sidewalk that went out to the alley, the long length of grassy yard that sloped up to another level in the middle of the yard, and the "north house" they called it. It was a storage shed in the back yard that was surrounded by hollyhocks. There was a homemade, oversized swing set way in the back. I was there in the middle of it all in an instant.

I don't know what it was that brought me there. Maybe it was the smell of grass or the feel of cool, damp air. My brothers and I spent many hours playing there, and in this present-day moment I was content in that memory. It was almost as if the smell and feel of the air that day joined me to another time and place that was pleasant for me. I enjoyed the feel of the morning and I enjoyed the memory too.

I don't know about you, but this happens often in my life. Something reaches one of my senses. I see or smell or feel something or hear a song that brings back a feeling. It can take me back in time. I once felt a scratchy fabric on my

skin and recalled wearing the long blue and white flowered dress that a friend loaned me. I wore it all day one Saturday when I was thirteen. I sat on the sidewalk and played jacks in it.

The sight of the moon through the trees has taken me back to the memory of a soft, tentative kiss. Not long ago I was dozing off and in my sleepy state was taken back to the nights of rocking my babies, dozing, and I felt the warmth of a tiny baby in my arms right then and there.

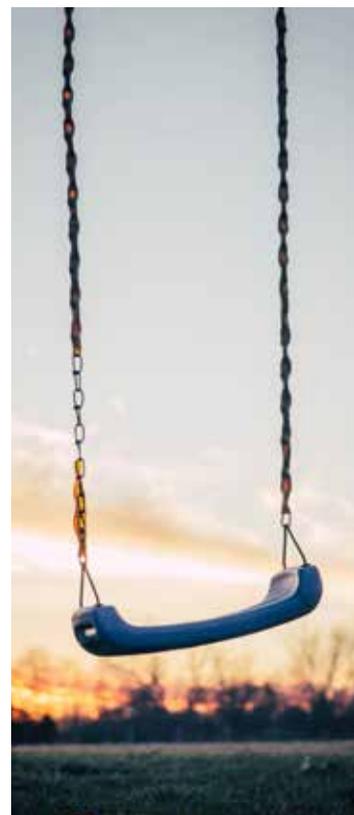
When we're grieving, some memories that sneak up on us are what author and grief counselor, Alan Wolfelt PhD calls "grief bursts." They can throw us into the depth of our pain and loss. Each memory can represent an empty place in our lives.

These days the memories may seem to have a sense of longing associated with them. The searching and longing can be unbearable, especially early in our grief. The desire to reconnect with an earlier time or to fill the empty places is natural. Memories pull us into these spaces.

Like my memory of my grandparent's grassy yard, we can be taken to a good place of memory that is pleasant to remember and not painful. Even when we are grieving

we can often find comfort in these memories. At those times it's almost like we've been given a surprise gift of the former place and time to enjoy.

Yet memories of happy times can be painful in grief for awhile. It helps to share them in some way, talking to someone, writing in a journal or blog or creating traditions around those memories. If you would like to speak to someone about your experience please be in touch with a Grief Support Specialist at 816.363.2600.



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# Letting Go

By Denise Brown MA-ATR

Art Therapist/Grief Support Specialist

After the loss of a significant person, you may be faced with the daunting task of going through belongings and making decisions about personal items. Another big decision may include moving to a smaller living space, forcing you to deal with personal items before you're emotionally ready.

We're all faced with letting go of items from time to time. In the midst of grief, making these decisions may trigger anxiety, deep sadness, discouragement and confusion.

Keeping the goal in mind may help. A frequent goal is the need to release what is no longer needed in your living space. (You may decide to store items in a garage or closet, if you cannot bear to part with certain items yet). Proceed, if you can, when you're ready, if this is an option.

So how do you let go of loved ones belongings that have a strong connection to the deceased? Reflect on your loved one to help decide what to keep and what

you can let go. Consider which items are similar. Will keeping just one fulfill the memory? Think about which objects make you feel good, paying close attention to your emotions as you touch or hold each piece.

Try to honor yourself by noticing when you need to take breaks. When the time is right, you may find ways to make these choices. Think about allowing for something new. There can be a sense of closure in releasing some items.

Everyone has their own philosophy about the importance of belongings and that will dictate your approach. There are many books on this subject that might be helpful. However long it takes to achieve your goal, acknowledge small achievements. Doing so may keep you motivated and your eye on the goal. To add fun to this process, give yourself rewards along the way. Self-nurturing and compassion during any grief "work" helps, so consider discovering and using extra self-care during this process.

## 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 22, 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. Luminaries 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 forecast.

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 30.

Enclosed is my gift of \_\_\_\_\_ in support of the good work of Kansas City Hospice.

I cannot make a gift at this time, but would like a luminary to honor my loved one.

*I would like to place a luminary in honor of*

Please call 816.363.2600 if you have any questions.  
We ask that luminary requests arrive by Monday, April 30.

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.

"There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love."

- Washington Irving



# Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care

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

If you'd like your name removed from our newsletter mailing list, please call KCH&PC at 816.363.2600.

Editor: Wanda Kelsey-Mendez

### Signup for Email

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

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## Support Group Schedule

Kansas City Hospice offers grief support groups and workshops. Groups are designed for adults at least two or three months past a loss.

There's no charge to attend most groups, but registration is required. Sessions may close when group is full, or cancel due to low registration.

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

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

### ***Easing Grief through Yoga***

Every other Friday, 9:45-10:45 am. Suggested donation \$10, Solace House, 8012 State Line, Suite 202. No experience necessary.

### ***Easing Grief through Writing***

Mondays, April 16, 23 & 30, 3-4:30 pm, Solace House, 8012 State Line, Suite 202. Register by April 9.

### ***The Grief Journey Begins***

Every Monday for five weeks, beginning April 12, 5 to 6:30 pm, NorthCare Team Office-Kansas City Hospice, 2000 NE Vivion Road, Ste 200. Register by April 5.

### ***A Solace Sensation***

For the 20th anniversary of Solace House, fund raiser to be held at Boulevard Brewery on April 28. [solacesensation.org](http://solacesensation.org)

### ***Easing Grief through Art***

Thursdays, May 10 & 17, 6-7:30 pm. Suggested donation \$10, Kansas Office, 10100 W 87 Street, Ste 100. Register by April 26.

### ***The Grief Journey Begins***

Every Monday for five weeks, beginning July 9, 6 to 7:30 pm, Kansas City Hospice House, 12000 Wornall. Register by July 2.

### ***Spouse/Partner Loss***

Every Tuesday for five weeks beginning July 10, 3-4:30 pm, First Presbyterian Church, 1625 NW O'Brien Rd, Lee's Summit. Register by July 5.

### ***Spouse/Partner Loss Monthly Drop-In Group***

First Tuesday each month, 3-4:30 pm, First Presbyterian Church, 1625 NW O'Brien Rd, Lee's Summit.

### ***Camp Erin***

Weekend, overnight camp for grieving teens and children. June 8-10. [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)

***What's Your Grief?***  
[whatsyourgrief.com](http://whatsyourgrief.com)

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