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Journeys

A newsletter to help with grief



Kansas City Hospice
& PALLIATIVE CARE

Raw Grief Feels Like Drowning

by Alisha Bozarth

Adapted with permission from AlishaBozarth.com



I've never drowned, but I can imagine the panic. The inundation. The fight as your body merely wants to do what is natural, just breathe. The burn in the chest. The enveloping darkness. The pound of every pulse reminding you that you are surrounded on all sides by what you can't escape.

And that is raw grief. Every single reality check is your heart trying to comprehend what your brain is telling you is true. The finality of loss and the vapor of a life you can no longer grasp.

A thousand thoughts taking away your innocence. A thousand reminders like acid on a cut.

A diamond shifts in the light and sparkles. But raw grief is a diamond with a thousand faces. And every shift of life brings to light yet another blinding, unwanted truth. No sparkle, just gravity, pulling you down, stealing your breath.

Raw grief is being numb to everything but the pain. This fog of indifference envelopes you. The kids didn't eat their vegetables? The plants didn't get watered? Who cares? Not you. You're just trying to breathe. They say to forget about your toe hurting, smash a finger. Well, that is how you feel. The throb in your soul drowns out all other cares.

Raw grief is dealing with firsts. Not just the big ones like anniversaries and birthdays, but the little

ones. The first piece of mail addressed to him. The first phone call asking for him that you have to utter those infamous words. The first trip to the grocery store where your shopping list doesn't include his things. The first family function where his absence is felt everywhere.

Raw grief is being full of illogical thoughts. What would he say if he were here? How would I respond if he walked in this room right now? How would he handle this if the roles were switched? And we torture ourselves with the impossible. We make ourselves miserable with these thoughts but can't let go of them.

Raw grief is the word 'never' becoming a foul word because it taunts you with what will never be again. Once again, that shift of the grief diamond. He will never sit in that chair again. He will never watch this show with me. He will never see our girls married. He will never...you begin to hate that word. And daily, the nevers pounce.

Raw grief is that paranoia of memories losing their vibrancy. Like trying to grasp the wind, you desperately try to clutch them. And panic sweeps in when they fade against your will.

In a slow, migrant journey, the shift of the grief diamond loses its vibrancy. What was once blinding light has dimmed. You are able to examine your feelings and the changes in your life without having to look away. The tyrannical waves that whelmed you shift to surges that merely lose your footing.

And then those waves fade until you are enveloped with tender currents that are gentle reminders of the tempest you have walked through. Though the water surrounds you, it is no longer your tyrant. Your head can now stay above water with the flux of grief's influence. Your breath, instead of gasps, become deeper and steadier, revitalizing a new form of life.

If you should feel overwhelmed, call Grief Support Services at 816.363.2600. We're here to listen and support you.

Getting Back to Routines...or Not

by Jacque Amweg, LCSW, Grief Support Specialist

Maybe it's time to start getting back to regular routines...or not. This time of year, things like back-to-school, seasons changing, baseball ending and football beginning, the thought of upcoming holidays... all bring back memories and emotions that can be unexpected.

Sometimes I long for precious annual activities. I can't believe so much time has passed since I held a little hand on the way into kindergarten. I remember the family gathered to watch the Royals playing in the World Series – both times! It's time to start pulling out Grandma's holiday recipes and deciding who is going to make what this year.

Seasons and events are signals of what comes next. There's usually a flow and rhythm to lives. Think of the regularity of seasons, the routine of weekends, workday patterns or even the habits of meals

or bedtime. People have a way of incorporating ongoing changes into lives almost without thinking about it – until you can't.

These transition times can be disrupted in a powerful and painful way when someone dies.

I often hear people say they don't want the death of someone dear to them to change how they live. They want their usual activities for children to continue and for traditions to be maintained. They want to live as though they're not touched by this loss – when the reality is we are forever changed by a death.

Life is bound to be different. It may be a comfort to maintain routines and traditions. But it may also help to allow some changes, if needed. Holidays may need to be planned in a new way. You may not feel up to maintaining your same work times. You may find

less meaning in some activities.

It may be hard to sleep in a half-empty bed. Chores and creative endeavors that used to give a sense of satisfaction may have less importance for awhile. Give some thought to when to force the routine and when to allow a change.

Everything may seem wrong or uncomfortable. Meanwhile, life goes on and you need to determine how (and how not) to keep going. Changing or keeping routines takes gentle self-care. And this can be a painful and disorienting time.

Rely on a trusted friend or family member to share your experience and find ways of expression that are right for you. If talking to someone about some of these adjustments would be helpful, please give us a call to schedule time with a grief support specialist.



Creative ways to change routines:

- ▶ Sleep on the other side of the bed.
- ▶ Invite a friend on the morning walk.
- ▶ Create something.
- ▶ Read before sleep.
- ▶ Vacation with family.
- ▶ Sleep late.
- ▶ Meditate each morning.
- ▶ Call a friend or family member every day.
- ▶ Plan a special dinner with someone.
- ▶ Arrange an area in your home with some special belongings and photos of the person who died.
- ▶ Shop at different stores.
- ▶ Hire out yard work.
- ▶ Sit in her recliner.
- ▶ Take the day off on his birthday.
- ▶ Light a candle at meals.
- ▶ Say "yes" to a friend's invitation.
- ▶ Tell the story.
- ▶ Don't fight the tears—let them come.



What Do I Do with All This Stuff?

By Christy Hansen MSW, LMSW, Grief Support Specialist

Sorting through a loved one's belongings can be an emotional task and possibly overwhelming. Approach the process with a plan to help soften the difficulty and make it manageable.

The 4 P's of Sorting

People —Who is best suited to help you with this task? Is it one that would be better tackled alone?

Priorities —Are there time sensitive things that must be done right away? Are there things you can put off until you have more time or feel more ready? Look for tasks that can be saved for later.

You can always box up pictures or mementos to sort through later when the pressure is off. I know someone who has a box of her mom's things. Every once in awhile, she opens it to see if she's ready. Up to now, she's not, so she shuts the box to think about it another day.

Plan —Break down your sorting into smaller tasks, starting with what feels easiest. Does cleaning out the linen closet, pantry or medicine cabinet feel like a smaller, more doable task? Maybe that will help you build confidence and momentum.

Pace Yourself —Work in chunks of time, no more than three or four hours. Plan meals so you don't find yourself hungry, tired and emotional. You might also plan a "buffer activity." Do something enjoyable, relaxing or soothing after a sorting session.

Find Ways to Avoid Guilt

Sometimes it's easier to part with belongings when you know they're going to good use.

- Give sentimental items to family members as a remembrance.
- Give items to charity to benefit others.
- Try to not feel guilty about discarding items past their usefulness. Everything has its time.

Take Care of Yourself

In the midst of any overwhelming task, give yourself grace and gentleness. Remember, the goal is not to finish quickly, but to feel you've done well. Honor your loved one and yourself in the process.

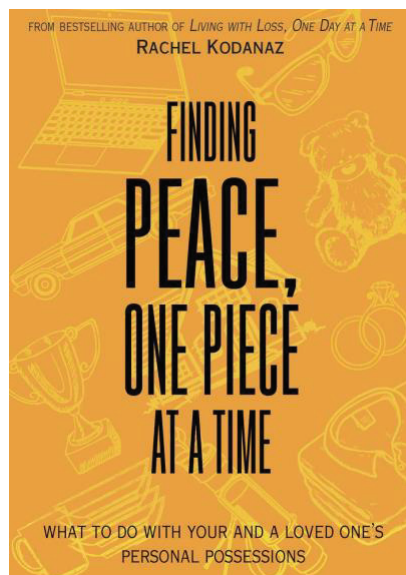
Top Drawer Resale Boutique

Did you know that proceeds from Top Drawer Resale Boutique benefit families served by Kansas City Hospice? Staffed entirely by volunteers, they accept gently used clothing, accessories, home decor, and art. **9433 Mission 10-5:30 M-F**

Plus, the Jewelry for Hospice program turns old (even broken) jewelry into unique new creations!

I have a friend who agonized over throwing out her mom's "treasures" — bits and pieces of old jewelry saved for sentimental reasons by someone who grew up in the Depression. Knowing they would not go to the landfill made Jewelry for Hospice the right choice for her.

Please call Grief Support Services at 816.363.2600 if you need assistance coping with your "stuff" or for any other reason.



Please join

Solace House Center for Grief & Healing
as we welcome author Rachel Kodanaz

Finding Peace, One Piece at a Time

how personal possessions tell a beautiful story of a person's life and how to maintain a connection to our loved ones through their possessions

Learn about the 10 Essentials and the Magic of 6 piles

**Thursday, November 14, 2019
4:30 pm at Solace House**

8012 State Line #202, Prairie Village, KS 66208
RSVP or additional information: lfarmer@KCHospice.org



SOLACE HOUSE
Kansas City Hospice
& PALLIATIVE CARE



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& PALLIATIVE CARE

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Editor: Wanda Kelsey-Mendez

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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

Cooking for One
Two nights, Oct 22 & 24, 6 - 8 pm, Kansas City Hospice House, suggested donation \$10. (Call Julie 816.363.2600 by Oct 15)

The Grief Journey: North
Tuesdays, Nov 5, 12, 19, 26 & Dec 3 from 10 - 11:30 am, Liberty Community Center, 1600 S Withers Rd, Liberty, MO 64068. (Call Beth 816.691.5119 by Oct 29)

The Grief Journey: South
Mondays, Oct 21, 28, Nov 4, 11, & 18, 6 - 7:30 pm, Kansas City Hospice House, Conference Room, 12000 Wornall. (Call Melissa 913.894.8228 by Oct 14)

Coping with Loss during the Holidays
Nov 19 6-7:30 pm **OR** Dec 3 10:30-noon, North KC Hospital - Pavilion, (Call Susan or Beth 816.691.5119)

Spouse/Partner Loss
Monthly Ongoing Group
First Tuesday monthly, 3:00 – 4:30 pm, First Presbyterian Church
1625 NW O'Brien Road
Lee's Summit, MO 64081
(Call Julie 816.363.2600)

Grief Education and Support Series:
Topics Vary Each Month
Registration not required
First Thursday monthly, 3 – 4 pm, North Kansas City Hospital, North Oak Room, 2800 Clay Edwards Dr, NKC MO 64116

Book Event: Finding Peace, One Piece at a Time by Rachel Kodanaz
Nov 12, 7pm at Unity Temple on the Plaza, host: Rainy Day Books.

Additional Grief Resources



SOLACE HOUSE
CENTER FOR GRIEF & HEALING
Kansas City Hospice

913.341.0318
SolaceHouse.org

SkillBuilders - Education and Support for Widows, Widowers and Caregivers
913.383.2519

Grief Support Network
griefsupportnetwork.org

What's Your Grief?
whatsyourgrief.com

Visit Us Online
KCHospice.org/Grief/
Learn about our services, resources, previous issues of Journeys and more.