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Journeys

A newsletter to help with grief



Kansas City Hospice
& PALLIATIVE CARE

Sprinkle day

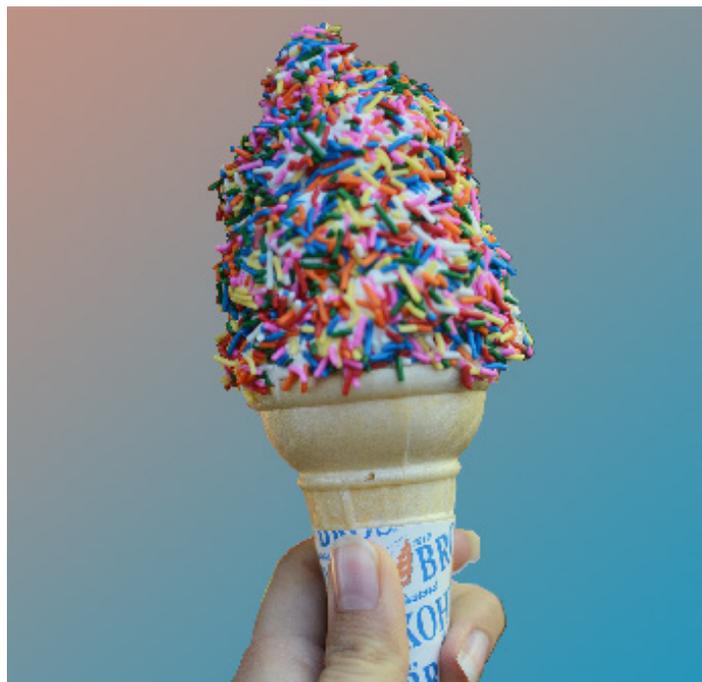
by Jacque Amweg, LCSW, LCSW, CT, Clinical Social Worker, EMDR Therapist

Did you ever think it would feel so good to simply drive through town or sit ten feet from a loved one in the driveway? Could you ever have imagined that working in the grocery store would become as frenzied as it became for a while? Should we have expected that real life would become more dramatic and painful than fictional television? Sadly, we were separated from our family and friends as a result of: working in an at-risk essential job, losing a job, or working from home with toddlers as “coworkers.”

In my day-to-day work, I often speak to people who are going through additional crises. These days are hard for those who were already grieving, depressed or anxious. While it is typical for me to encourage good self-care, expression of grief, and staying connected to others, all of those suggestions have become more difficult to carry out. Joining with others for support has morphed into using screen time and phone calls to connect. Doctor appointments for wellness are now more complicated with cumbersome procedures.

We miss the much-needed physical contact and face-to-face interaction with friends and family. It's important to acknowledge the additional distress all of this poses on our well-being. I added two other suggestions recently: limit exposure to the news and try to maintain a daily schedule.

My brother recently shared a memory from his early teens. He calls it a “sprinkle day.” He fell and broke his ankle and had to be taken to the doctor. The way he tells it, the other four of his siblings had to go to school while he went to the doctor, had his leg put in a cast, and then Mom treated him to ice cream. To this day, he thinks of that as a special day. He had Mom’s undivided comfort and attention for the entire day and he had ice cream with sprinkles. He still acknowledges that he longs for a sprinkle day now and then. Frankly, it makes me wish we could all have a sprinkle day.



I know my brother’s sprinkle day happened organically, but maybe it’s possible to take what made it special and create an intentional day of comfort. For example:

- Individual undivided attention without the rest of the household
- Comfort when we are hurting or lonely
- A special treat

Here’s how it happened recently in my world. It was just my grown daughter and myself with each other’s undivided attention sitting at a social distance on the porch on a beautiful evening. We talked and laughed about our worries and pains. We relaxed, colored in adult coloring books, and had an adult beverage.

Just as every event and idea changes and evolves these days, creating a sprinkle day takes some creativity and adjustment. Our well-being and happiness depend on this kind of intentional self-care. What are your ideas for making your sprinkle day happen?

Kansas City Hospice Grief Support Specialists are available to support and listen. 816.363.2600.

Let music provide comfort

by Jesse Heilman, MT-BC, Music Therapist

During this pandemic season, music helps with emotional expression, mind and body relaxation, connection to our loved ones, and overall well-being.

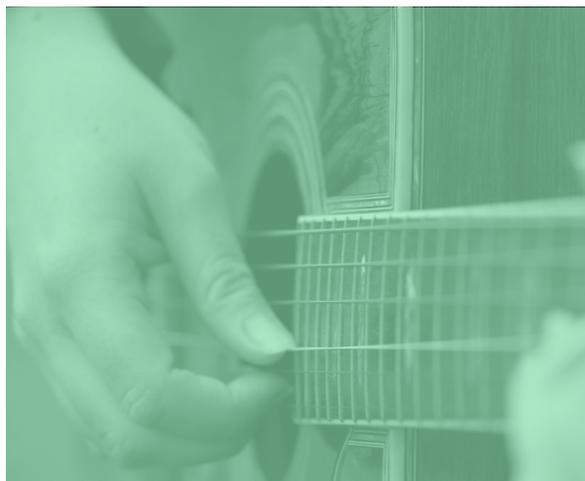
Listening to music with intention can create a space to help our emotions feel valid. Create playlists that center around themes such as hope, calm, joy or sadness. Use YouTube or music streaming services to create free playlists, which can be a helpful, creative project for self-awareness. Choose music that supports you.

Sometimes it helps to find music that speaks to us right where we are in a particular moment. For example, music can help us express something that otherwise might be difficult, or be the medium that provides a safe space for self-expression,

and allows us to show emotion in a way that may not otherwise come easily.

Using music to support our daily well-being may involve listening to upbeat, fast music to make us feel more alert and improve concentration as we begin the morning or work in the afternoon, or slower, relaxing music to quiet our minds and relax our muscles in the evening before sleeping. It's important to remember that when our bodies are stressed and holding tension, music can help us to physically relax. Try incorporating light stretches, movement, or dancing with music to relax your body.

Don't forget to be creative with music! Do you have an old guitar gathering dust in the basement or a piano that is barely touched? Learning an instrument can be a great way to gain a new skill



and enjoy making music with friends and loved ones. Explore opportunities for online lessons and videos to help you begin.

Play, stretch, dance or sing along with your favorite songs for some movement and expression. Remember, just like exercise, singing releases endorphins and feels good.

However you choose to do it, incorporating music into your daily routine in an intentional way can be beneficial for mental, emotional, social and physical well-being.

Am I doing this right?

by Susan Wurtenberger, MS, LMSW, Grief Support Specialist

There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

There are no acceptable or unacceptable emotions.

There is no timeline for adjusting.

There is no prescribed way to cope.

Your grief is your own, and, just like your uniqueness, grief is distinctive. The way you grieve is influenced by your personality, temperament, culture, and life history. The way others see you as a griever will look very different than that of a friend or family member.

There are two basic grief styles. It's rare that someone is completely one specific type. It's more likely that people fall somewhere in between. Identifying your own style helps you make choices consistent with your character to increase comfort and healing.

An **intuitive griever** has strong emotional reactions. Expression mirrors emotion. Crying and exhaustion are common for this type of griever. Crying may provide the physical release that, although draining, may bring healing and relief. If you are an intuitive griever, you may find comfort in telling and retelling the story of your loved one to a trusted family member or friend. You might also benefit from a traditional

Telehealth grief support is easier than you think!

By Melissa Waugh, MS, Grief Support Specialist



Did you ever imagine meeting with a Grief Support Specialist via telehealth? Probably not before the current pandemic, especially if you are not comfortable with technology. Perhaps your loved one handled all of the technology issues in your life and at the moment, you feel overwhelmed with the idea of taking on something new such as a telehealth visit. This reluctance is normal.

The good news is telehealth is not as difficult as it sounds. In fact, most people find the technology is actually easy and convenient.

People who use telehealth agree that it allows them to participate in Grief Support Services without driving to an office, and with no exposure in a waiting room. If they are not at home, they can log on remotely. Most feel that it is much easier to use than anticipated.

Some people now use a similar program to meet with their medical doctor for follow-up visits. Often, telehealth allows clients to participate in ways that an office visit wouldn't allow, such as showing family pictures on their walls, their loved one's dog or cat, or artwork that they or their loved one created. One person took their tablet outside to share the sounds of the birds in the memorial garden they had planted.

Log on to our website: kchospice.org and explore online grief support articles. If you prefer to listen rather than read, podcasts about grief are also available.

Always remember that Grief Support Services is here for you. While we are happy that we have telehealth and online services to offer, we look forward to the time when we can once again provide in-person groups and support.

Set-Up Tips for Telehealth

1. It is important to choose a location for your visit where you can talk privately with few interruptions.
2. All you need for a telehealth visit is an internet connection and a device such as a home computer with a microphone and camera, a laptop, a tablet, or a smartphone.
3. You will receive an email with the weblink www.doxy.me attached to the telehealth program.
4. Practice logging in a few days prior to your appointment so that you can perform a test to determine if your camera and microphone are compatible.
5. If you use your phone for the visit, use a phone holder or lean the phone against something in order to keep it steady during the session. That will allow you to be free to talk without trying to hold your phone steady.
6. Make sure your device is fully charged or plugged in. Video calls consume more energy, so you want to be prepared. If you decide you want to try telehealth, call 816.363.2600 and ask for Grief Support Services. Grief Support Specialists are also available for phone visits.



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MORE RESOURCES

Grief Support Network
griefsupportnetwork.org

What's Your Grief?
whatsyourgrief.com

Camp Erin partner - Eluna
Elunanetwork.org

Journeys

A newsletter to help with grief



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Visit Us Online at KCHospice.org/Grief/
Resources, previous issues of Journeys and more

Am I doing this right?

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support group to find connection with someone experiencing a similar loss.

On the other end of the style spectrum is the **instrumental griever**, who may appear less expressive. This person may not outwardly cry, but rely on physical or thoughtful expression. Often this griever is solution-focused or task-oriented and may channel emotions in a very concrete manner. If you are an instrumental griever, working on a project in honor of your loved one may allow a healthy expression of grief. You might sometimes seek aloneness,

reading on death and loss. You may seek to learn about a new role and what is required of you.

Groups that are adventure or target-focused (such as single parenting or financial planning) may be a better fit than traditional support groups.

Your relationship with your loved one was like no other. Your grief is unique and your coping style should be consistent with your personality and temperament. Recognizing and respecting that everyone will process grief in their own way, frees you to choose an authentic strategy to bring comfort to your days. Finding your own path can be less overwhelming when you remember that there is no right or wrong way to grieve.