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A newsletter to help with grief



Kansas City Hospice
& PALLIATIVE CARE

Maybe It's Okay to Be Weak

by Alisha Bozarth

Adapted with permission from AlishaBozarth.com

How many times have I heard the phrase “You’re so strong” as I’ve been forced to walk a path in life I would have never chosen. Too many to count. People mean well. The need to be strong drives us as humans. I mean, who wants to be seen as weak, right? We hold it together, and tack on a smile.

But being strong in the biggest battle of my life is like asking a marathon runner to curl 20 pound weights while he runs. It’s too much.

We need permission to be weak. Society portrays strength as not being able to be taken down. But that’s silly. We all get taken down at some point in life. No one is indestructible. And tragedy is a force as powerful as a tsunami. We all cave under its power. Some just cover it up better than others.

Maybe strength is allowing yourself be weak at the right moments. Letting it crash into you and envelope you...Relaxing the muscles that are trying desperately to resist it. Because you know it’s temporary. You know it’s necessary. You know it will work something unique and profound.

Just because I am weak, doesn’t mean I have to stay that way. It just means I need to be...right now. And after you’ve been weak, you have the strength to allow healing. The strength to rise again.

Imagine someone having a broken foot but being determined to “be strong” and continue to carry the load they normally did? No, when someone suffers a physical injury, we EXPECT them to take it easy and recover. To be weak.

In fact, proper healing requires it. Isn’t it the same for grief? To “stay strong” is actually living in denial of the storm inside. And storms break. And that’s okay. Rest in your brokenness so healing can come.

Maybe it’s okay to not be okay all the time. Maybe it’s okay to be weak. The sweet surrender to the failure. The collapse of those muscles straining against the pain. Sometimes, in the darkest



moments of life, we need that relief – the relief of not having to hold it all together.

As we trudge our way through a tragedy in life, don’t carry the false notion of being strong. I’ll gladly say I’m weak.

Because it means I’m human. It means I’ve loved fully. And lost fully.

Because I’m weak, I’ve tasted what it is to be carried – that humbling, soul-crying-from-thankfulness-as-others-lifted-me-up, heart-deepening, kind of carried.

Because I’m weak, I understand the power of grief. I understand its necessity.

Because I’m weak, I appreciate its beauty and what it births.

Because I’m weak, I appreciate the victory of standing again.

Because I’ve tasted the darkness, the light holds new depths.

Because I’ve drowned, my simple breath holds more awe.

Because I’ve been carried, I understand compassion. Because being weak, ultimately, gives room to heal.

Because I’m weak, I’ve realized it is actually part of being strong.

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

Treating Complicated Grief with EMDR

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

The death of a loved one is one of the most distressing experiences you will face. Grief is a natural response to loss. One of the tasks of grief is to keep an enduring connection with the one who died while moving forward in life.

But for some people, feelings of loss are severe and don't improve with time. This is complicated grief. Painful emotions are so long lasting and severe that it's hard to recover.

You can be at greater risk for complicated grief when loss is sudden or unexpected. It can happen with the loss of a child, or death after a long illness. You may have unresolved family issues or feel a lack of support from those around you.

You may be struggling if you experience any of the following signs of complicated grief:

- avoiding reminders of the deceased
- feeling negative about the future
- numbness and detachment
- feeling stunned, dazed, or shocked
- difficulty acknowledging the death
- feeling that life is empty or meaningless
- difficulty imagining a fulfilling life without the deceased
- feeling that a part of you died
- excessive irritability
- bitterness or anger

You may have heard about a treatment for PTSD called Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). It's a type of therapy that helps with healing from trauma or distressing experiences. EMDR can also be

very helpful for people coping with severe grief.

After an impactful event, you may have difficult memories, sounds, dreams or images that continue to come up or are intrusive. EMDR can help you to experience shifts in insight or changes in images, feelings or beliefs about the event.

One person who experienced EMDR therapy during her grief said that she began to feel like engaging again and took up a forgotten hobby. Another reported that she now feels a sense of spaciousness about her grief. One man said that when he wakes at night, he no longer relives the whole experience. He's able to go back to sleep.

It's common to have relief from the anguish and anxiety of grief reaction after EMDR.

(Continued on Page 3)



Please join Kansas City Hospice as we remember your loved one at

Circle of Lights

A Ceremony of Remembrance

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

8:30 PM – Lighting Ceremony & Program

J.C. Nichols Fountain on the Country Club Plaza

To participate, please complete the form below or respond online at KCHospice.org/COL

Call 816.276.2617 with questions.

Inclement weather? Check our social media or web page above, or call 816.363.2600 for alternate plans.

Mail to: KCH, 1500 Meadow Lake Parkway, Ste 200, KCMO 64114 or go online at KCHospice.org/COL

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:

My Name _____

My Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone (____) _____

What Do I Say Now?

By Beth Houghton, LCSW, Grief Support Specialist



Tips On How To Respond When Someone You Love Is Grieving

It can be hard to support a grieving person when you are at a loss for words or feel there is nothing that can be said or done that could possibly bring comfort. Or perhaps you are grieving someone you loved dearly and are on the receiving end of insensitive comments, or worse yet, no acknowledgment of your loss at all.

In her article, *When Someone You Love Is Grieving: How to Really Help*, Angie Schultz writes: "Grief has a way of unsettling everyone in the proximity. It stirs up our own unhealed parts. Is it any wonder that we have the instinct to smooth over the other person's emotions, to take everything back to normal, before it has the chance to stir up something inside us?"

But as we know, there is no "back to normal" when someone we love dies. Normal no longer exists and those people who have suffered a loss need their friends and family more than ever.

(Complicated Grief continued)

The brain naturally wants to heal. EMDR uses the natural abilities of the brain to help it learn, organize and update memories of your experience.

Most commonly, the therapist will help you begin side-to-

side eye movements or other methods while thinking of the event. Sets of eye movements are repeated until the event becomes less disturbing. Memories remain intact while there is relief from anxiety and anguish that can be part of grief.

EMDR therapy is available through Passages Counseling Program of Kansas City Hospice. Passages accepts insurance and Medicare. You may also search EMDRGKC.com for therapists in this area and inquire if they have experience in working with grief.

Below are some tips of helpful and not so helpful things to say to a griever, composed with the assistance of What's Your Grief website and personal experiences shared by grievers:

Helpful

- › There are no words
- › I'm so sorry you are going through this
- › Tell me more about him/her
- › You don't have to talk, I will just sit beside you
- › He/she will not be forgotten

Not so helpful

- › Everything happens for a reason
- › Time heals all wounds
- › You should be over this by now
- › They're in a better place
- › It was their time

More than anything, being present for a grieving friend or family member can make a world of difference in how they work through their loss. We all make mistakes and say the wrong thing at times. Acknowledging when this happens will likely ease those uncomfortable situations.

Although bearing witness to the pain experienced by someone who has suffered a loss can feel incredibly difficult, it is also a great privilege.

If you're interested in learning more about this topic, please join Susan Wurtenberger and me for our workshop, "What Do I Say Now? Supporting Someone in Grief," Tuesday, March 31st, 6-7pm, North Kansas City Hospital, Burlington Room in the Pavilion.



Kansas City Hospice

& PALLIATIVE CARE

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Return Service Requested

Signup for Newsletter by Email
KCHospice.org/email-signup/
Opt out any time.

To remove yourself from the mailing list, please call KCH&PC at 816.363.2600.

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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**. Online calendar KCHospice.org

Spouse/Partner Loss Monthly Ongoing Group

First Tuesday monthly, 2 - 3:15 pm, First Presbyterian Church 1625 NW O'Brien Road Lee's Summit, MO 64081 (Call Julie 816.363.2600)

What Do I Say Now?

Supporting Someone in Grief - details pg 3. For professionals and community. Tuesday, March 31, 6 - 7 pm, North Kansas City Hospital, Burlington Room in the

Pavilion. No registration. Questions? Susan or Beth at 816.691.5119.

The Grief Journey: South

Tuesdays, March 31, April 7-28, 6 - 7:30 pm, Kansas City Hospice House, Conference Room, 12000 Wornall. (Call Melissa 913.894.8228 by March 23)

The Grief Journey: North

Wednesdays, July 8-29, Aug 5, 6 - 7:30 pm, Kansas City Hospice North Office, 2000 NE Vivion Rd, NKC, MO 64118 (Please register with Susan or Beth at 816.691.5119 by July 1)

Sorting Through

Taking care of a loved one's possessions can feel overwhelming but can also be healing. This 3-session workshop is designed to help you with practical and sentimental considerations. Tuesdays, April 7- 21, 10:30-11:30 am. (Call Beth 816.691.5119, to register before Mar 31)



KANSAS CITY HOSPICE
SOLACE HOUSE
PART OF THE ELUNA NETWORK

June 12-14, Parkville. Weekend camp for ages 6 to 17 grieving the death of a significant person in their lives. Combines grief education and emotional support with fun, traditional camp activities. Acceptance based on interview & space. No fees to attend. (Solace House 913.341.0318 or visit KCHcamps.org)

Camp Erin is a safe place for children and teens to:

- ▶ Tell their story in a safe environment
- ▶ Learn they are not alone
- ▶ Process grief in healthy ways
- ▶ Honor and memorialize loved ones
- ▶ Build a toolbox of coping skills
- ▶ Have fun!

Camp Erin® Resources & more at ElunaNetwork.com



CAMP CAROUSEL Kansas City Hospice

Sept 18-20, Heartland Center, Parkville. Weekend camp for grieving families. Acceptance is based on interview and available space. No fees to attend. (Call Solace House 913.341.0318 or visit KCHcamps.org)

Visit Us Online KCHospice.org/Grief/

Resources, previous issues of Journeys and more.



SOLACE HOUSE CENTER FOR GRIEF & HEALING Kansas City Hospice

913.341.0318
SolaceHouse.org

Other Grief Resources
Grief Support Network
griefsupportnetwork.org

What's Your Grief?
whatsyourgrief.com

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