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HOPEline is a **monthly newsletter** of **HOPE FOR BEREAVED**, a nonprofit community organization providing support for the bereaved. The **purpose** of **HOPEline** is to help those who have experienced the death of a loved one. Each month, **we share information and ideas** from bereaved people and professionals to help you through your grief journey. Please know you are not alone. **HOPE is here to help you.** To talk with a compassionate, caring member of our peer support team, **please call us at 315-475-9675.**

Everyone has a story. This is from someone who wishes to remain anonymous:

Within 15 months my entire family was gone, all unexpected, and all sudden. I went to three different groups each month: bereaved parents, suicide and widows/widowers. Each group provided needed care and showed me that I could SURVIVE. I cannot ever begin to thank the group leaders and staff at HOPE enough. I just wouldn't have made it without them.

Do you want to share your story?

Contact us today to share how HOPE helped you or how you are progressing through your journey.



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I pray that God will comfort, encourage and heal many people and families, through this issue's newsletter.

in memory of my cousin, **TONY WILLOUGHBY**

Dedicated by Darrin Dayton



Dear Friends of HOPE,

This past month has been challenging for our community and our country in many ways.

Fires destroyed family homes. Tragic accidents and violence took the lives of young people who had their whole futures ahead of them. Plane crashes claimed the lives of many, including those who once called Syracuse home. These events have left us reeling, trying to process the weight of these losses. The grief we are collectively feeling is palpable and there is a growing sense of uncertainty about the world around us.

In the wake of each tragedy, people may say, "I can't imagine...", but that's not really true, is it? People *can* imagine. And therein lies the challenge. It seems so unbelievably unfair, so impossible, that a family could be torn apart or a person could lose everything in an instant. Our instinct is to turn away from that reality because if it can happen to someone else, it can happen to us. So, we fight it or we flee from it.

But what if, instead, we allow ourselves to sit with the pain by acknowledging the raw truth of it?

Too often we see pain as something that needs to be fixed. We try to drown it out, distract ourselves, move on too quickly. But what if we start to see pain as a normal reaction to love lost? Because that's what grief is: a natural, human response to losing something or someone we love.

It's important to remember that grief is not only about death; it comes in many forms. Losing a home, a job, or even a sense of safety can deeply impact our well-being. When these things happen, it is natural to feel overwhelmed, but you are not alone. These tragedies remind us of the importance of leaning on one another, of finding strength in our connections, and of seeking support when we need it.

Even in the most difficult times, hope remains. We see it in the kindness of neighbors, in the way people show up for each other, in the strength of this community. Let us continue to lean on one another, to speak about our grief openly, and to remind each other that, even in loss, love endures.



From Executive Director
Kelly Ocampo

With warmth and encouragement,

Kelly

What's Normal?

By: Jennifer Shontz, LCSW

Grief Support Specialist, Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care



Losing a loved one turns your world upside down. You experience emotions you have never felt before, and some are overwhelming and intense. You react in ways that aren't typical for you. You long for what was "normal" in your life before your loved one died but your heart reminds you that things are forever changed. In other words, in grief, it's normal to feel that nothing is normal.

What *is* normal in early grief is a number of emotions and reactions that exist on a continuum, from one extreme to the other. For example, you may avoid places or objects that prompt memories of your loved one. Or, you may actively seek out those objects, such as photos and personal belongings, to evoke memories that are comforting. One person stays busy and welcomes distractions, while another struggles to do anything. Both of these reactions are

considered to be "normal."

Other reactions that may feel unusual but are very common among people who are grieving include:

Fatigue. "I'm so tired and I'm not even doing anything." Remember, grief is work and you are using a lot of energy to process your loss.

Physical Changes. "I can't sleep," or, "I want to sleep all the time." "I have no appetite." "I have aches and pains; I just feel weak." Grief has a very real, physical component, including a decreased resistance to illness.

Cognitive changes. Forgetfulness, difficulty focusing and with making decisions are prevalent. "I can't think. I can't even read."

Experiencing the presence of your loved one. There is a disquieting sense of unreality in the first months of grief. In our previous "normal world," we expected that person to be present, so it's understandable that it would take time to adjust to this new world of absence. Talking to your loved one, calling out for that person, hearing his/her voice or waiting for an appearance are often feared to be "crazy" reactions but are simply part of the process of fully experiencing the reality of loss. "I just can't believe it!"

Apathy. We often temporarily lose our joy to live and we feel apathetic about being part of this world. Some grievers think about what it would be like to die in order to be with the person they lost. This can be alarming to those who care about them, but it is a natural response. However, having the intention to die, making plans to end your life or continually thinking about death are signs of complications in the grief process and you must seek professional help.

Thinking about other losses. Your loss can bring up past losses that become tender again. We may also grieve abstract losses that are difficult to define, such as the roles we had with our loved ones — wife, son, caregiver, companion. We long for the future that was taken from us: our retirement together, financial security, enjoying the growth of children and grandchildren. We grieve the future as well as the past, as we simultaneously struggle through the present.

Questioning. Death is difficult to comprehend, and often seems illogical or unfair. "Why do good people die too soon?" "Why did it have to be him? He was never sick before!" As we struggle with these questions, we are challenged to look at our understanding of what life "should" be and to search for meaning.

There will be a time when the world is right-side up, our hearts aren't inside-out and our legs balance us firmly on the ground again. We may continue to long for what was, but we will also enjoy what is and have hope for what can be. On the way, remember to be patient with yourself and with this process of creating a "new normal."

It's Happening Again

By: Sandy Goodman; the author of [Love Never Dies: A Mother's Journey from Loss to Love](#) (Jodere Group, 2002), and the founder and chapter leader of the Wind River Chapter of [The Compassionate Friends](#).

It's happening again. Right outside my front door, under an inch of leftover snow, a daffodil is pushing its way up into the sunlight. The bare places in my lawn are thawed and messy and the steady drip from the roof lulls us to sleep. Yesterday, I strolled the thirty feet to my mailbox without a jacket. Spring has reappeared.

Spring is a time for optimism. Suddenly living seems easier, happier, and less stressful. Depression lifts and a feeling of hope fills the air. We shed our winter blues and replace our frowns and cantankerous attitudes with smiles and loving-kindness. We visit with our neighbors over fences, clean up the barbecues, and start leafing through seed catalogues. Life is good . . . but not invariably and not for everyone.

I remember a spring that bore no resemblance to what I have just described. It was the spring of 1997, and it was the first spring after my son's death. By the time the first warm day arrived that year, the numbness of Jason's death had disappeared and I had entered what I call the "pit of grief." Simply typing this paragraph takes me back in time and once again, I am there... *and it is cold and dark. I am alone, curled up in a corner of this make-believe place where only my pain exists. The sorrow is my only link to him, my only awareness, the only thing that matters. If I allow myself to move away from it, I may lose him again. I cannot do that. I cannot take that chance. And so I hold it. I cradle the pain in my arms, shielding it from those who want to take it from me, and I weep...*

However, spring arrives without invitations and it calls on everyone. It skips in like a long awaited guest and expects to be welcomed with open arms. I recall what seemed like the entire world growing jovial and lighthearted, which merely pushed me to tunnel further into my corner and the sanctuary of my grief. I longed for the reappearance of winter because it had kept the "ones who do not know" away from my door. I remember feeling betrayed. How could the earth suddenly wake up and come alive when my son had no opportunity to do so?

It's happening again. Spring is once again knocking on our doors. Each of you know, love, or can befriend someone who is precisely where I was six years ago. Someone who is hurting and building walls around his or her heart to keep you, and the entire world, out. You are unfamiliar with the grief process and are most likely very uncomfortable with just winging it when it comes to the subject of death. Therefore, I am going to give you a few suggestions that should ease your apprehension. If you can coax just one bereaved person out of the pit for a few hours this spring, you will have accomplished more than many people do in a lifetime.



Get His Attention. Go to the bakery, grab some doughnuts, then to the garden shop and buy some plants. Ring his doorbell. When he wearily opens the door a couple of inches and peers out, stick your foot in the door really fast. Tell him, "I really need coffee to go with these goodies, and will you show me a good place to plant these flowers for Jim?"

Say Her Name. While you're digging and planting those flowers, talk to her about something you remember about the deceased. If you didn't know him, ask questions. Get to know him. Use his name, as often as you can until both of you feel comfortable.

Give Him Things. Take him books that seem inspiring, candles he can light when he needs a connection, photo albums for his loved one's picture, and journals that he can write in at 3:00 a.m.

Invite Her to Breakfast or Coffee. It may be the only reason she has to get out of bed at all. The bereaved use sleep as a shelter from the world.

Take Him to a Doctor If He is a Danger to Himself or Others. Grief is depression. If it is severe enough, medication may help alleviate some of the pain until the bereaved person is strong enough to face it head on. Offer to go to a counseling session or a grief support group with him.

Call Her Often. Don't just call her once a month, call her once a day. Always ask her how she is feeling, what you can do, and then LISTEN.

Send a Card on Special Days. Special days are the deceased's birthday, death date, all holidays, anniversaries, and special family events such as weddings, confirmations, etc. Always write something like "Thinking of you and knowing that you must be missing John..."

Allow Him to Share His Spiritual Beliefs or Lack Thereof. Be open and willing to listen to anything he may be experiencing, feeling, or searching for. Your job is not to judge, but to support.

Last but not least, No Expectations. for the time she spends grieving. It is individual, nothing is "normal," and if she doesn't feel it now, grief waits. Just go with the flow. Stay with her and walk at her pace.

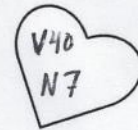
Once again, spring is fast approaching. You are feeling optimistic and excited about the upcoming season and all of the things you can accomplish as everything comes alive again. The winter has been long and hard, you are ready for a new beginning. I understand. I share your anticipation. Six years ago is not now. My corner of the pit has been occupied by many since my stay there, and I have no intention of revisiting it. But there are many who have just descended and they are burrowing in, seeking solitude. Although I firmly believe that being there is a necessary task in getting to the other side of grief, I also believe that we must come out occasionally for fresh air and sunshine. It is up to you, and to me, to go into his world and reach out for his hand. Once he's taken hold, his chance of successfully climbing out is greatly increased. So go on, go buy those doughnuts - someone is waiting just for you.



Hope











For

YOUTH



3/2025

Dear Friends,

Our grief journey is a long and difficult one. We miss our loved one who died, and they are no longer with us physically.  Our journey is lifelong because we will ALWAYS miss our loved one. Does our grief ever get (or feel) better? The answer is YES , as long as we continue on our journey!  How do we keep going on? The answer is to simply ALLOW ourselves to have our many feelings of grief.   To get through our grief, we have to go THROUGH feelings that arise; we can't skip over them  or go around them.  As we work on these feelings, we will discover  ways to cope, and get through each day a little better. We can then realize growth  and healing!  LOVE, MARK ~~JK~~



Dear Friends,

Vol 3 #12 3/2025

Our journey through grief has many layers, and can lead us into various expressions of our feelings. One vehicle we have to get in touch and cope with our emotions is through music. Although we may not immediately connect grief with music, they often intermingle. For example, we all may have heard a song that reminds of our deceased loved one, or things we did together. Often times these songs come up when we aren't expecting it. For example, we may be in a store, and a certain song may air over the intercom. Perhaps we are listening to the radio, or watching a commercial on TV, and a certain song comes on to remind us. Someone standing next to us may hum a familiar tune that brings our loved one to mind. The possibilities are literally endless! Many times, these sudden jolts of the memory of our loved one can be difficult and take us off-guard.

However, we can also use music as a powerful tool to help our expressions of grief. We may want to play a certain song because it is uplifting, and bring certain pleasant memories to the fore. Perhaps we are having a "down" day, and listening to a sad song can be a way to help us empty our sadness, e.g. through crying. Some of us may even have the gift of playing an instrument or being able to write songs as a way to enhance and voice our feelings. Exploring musical expression is a powerful avenue to make sense of our journey through grief, and keep us on a path to growth and healing! No matter what our musical tastes are, and the types of songs we prefer, music can allow us countless healthy expressions of our grief!

Take Care -Mark

Please forward your questions, comments, and ideas to mail@hopeforbereaved.com

SAVE THE DATES for our 2025 Events

- ♥ **JUST ANNOUNCED!** Delmonico's Anniversary Party
- Tuesday, May 6th
- ♥ Tournament of HOPE Golf Tournament - Monday,
June 23rd
- ♥ Remembrance Run/Walk for HOPE - Saturday,
August 2nd
- ♥ Celebration of HOPE - Friday, October 24th

Memorial and sponsorship opportunities are available.

Contact us to learn more! **P: 315-475-9675**

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

**All groups are 6:30 to 8:30 PM at HOPE for Bereaved unless otherwise noted*

- 1st Wed. | March 5th - Widows/Widowers, Engaged & Significant Others
- 2nd Tues. | March 11th - Family & Friends
- 2nd Wed. | March 12th - Survivors of Suicide
- 2nd Friday | March 14th - Family & Friends

**Clay Senior Center, 4948 State Rt 31, 11:30-1:30*

- 3rd Tues. | March 18th - Death By Drug Overdose
- 3rd Wed. | March 19th - Bereaved Parents (separate groups held for death of all ages + infant, newborn, & pregnancy death)
- 3rd Wed | March 19th - Senior Widows/Widowers
**10AM to 12PM*
- 3rd Thursday | March 20th - Parents without Parents

Individual counseling is also available

happening at HOPE



IMPORTANT NOTICE



Re: Virtual Support Groups

March will be the last month HOPE will offer a Zoom option for each of our separate support groups.

Starting in April, on the 1st Tuesday of the month, we will offer a Zoom-only grief support group for all grievers.



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MARCH 2025

SIGN UP FOR THE
33RD ANNUAL
TOURNAMENT OF
HOPE

JUNE 23, 2025
📍 **SUNSET RIDGE GOLF CLUB**
Presented by *Molly Elliot*

 **INFORMATION & REGISTRATION:**
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