

HOPEline

a bi-monthly newsletter from HOPE for Bereaved



WHEN GRIEF MEETS WINTER

A Season That Asks for Gentleness

Winter can feel especially heavy for those living with grief. The cold, the quiet, and the turning of the calendar often bring loss closer to the surface and ask more of us than we expect. Shorter and darker days can amplify loneliness and the start of a new year can create pressure to move forward before we feel ready.

In this winter issue of HOPEline, we offer words of wisdom, community voices, and local supports intended to honor grief in all its forms. As always, we work to create space for connection, understanding, and compassion.

Wherever you are on your journey, we hope this issue serves as a reminder that you are not alone as you move through the winter months.

Included in
this issue:

A Letter from the
Executive
Director

Reflections from
"A Conversation
About Grief"

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the Bereaved

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story of young
widowhood

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Comes Knocking:
Words from
Nightbirde

HOPE
for bereaved

A journey from grief to HOPE

A Message from the Executive Director

Kelly Ocampo

Dear Friends of HOPE:

As we move into 2026, I feel hopeful and energized. We are re-launching support groups like Senior Widows and Bereaved Parents with new formats and goals, and we'll continue refining our programs to meet the evolving needs of our community. We plan to expand alternative healing modalities - building on yoga and singing and moving further into creative and artistic spaces.

After 47 years, HOPE holds an incredible collection of grief articles, stories, and resources – all of which are currently tucked away in a file cabinet. This year, we'll begin making them accessible online, so anyone searching for grief support can find it exactly when they need it. We'll also work to better capture and share the stories of hope we witness every day, using data and storytelling to show how peer grief support reduces isolation and builds resilience within our community.

HOPE is the only nonprofit in our community offering comprehensive peer grief support at no charge - regardless of the circumstances of the death or how long ago it occurred. We want all of Central New York to know that. And thanks to the thoughtful work of our consultant, Board, staff, and volunteers, we'll begin implementing our capacity plan to ensure HOPE is here for another 47 years.

Thank you for being part of this journey. I hope you feel how much your presence, care, and belief in HOPE truly matter.

With Warmth & Gratitude,



Kelly Ocampo



Community Conversations

This past December, HOPE gathered a group of panelists for ***A Conversation About Grief***. We invited professionals from healthcare, education, mental health, nonprofit leadership, and financial advocacy to come together and discuss how grief weaves itself into our lives, relationships, and communities. Take a look below at some of the shared truths that emerged from the conversation and scan the QR Code on your phone camera to watch the event recording!



*Executive Director Kelly Ocampo
w/ panelists and moderator from,
“A Conversation About Grief”,
December 2025.*

Shared Truths:

- 1. Grief Doesn't Always Begin at Death:** Grief can show up during moments of transitions from relationships ending, to leaving behind old habits, or moving to a new home. Even changing careers or perceived identity can bring up feelings of grief.
- 2. Some Grief Unfolds Slowly:** In experiences like chronic illnesses or long-term change, grief doesn't happen in a single moment, but is layered and carried quietly over years as people and their loved ones are met with new changes.
- 3. How We Talk About Grief Matters:** Our words matter and the language we use in our families, our communities and our workplaces shape how prepared and supported people feel with when grief enters their lives.
- 4. Grief Doesn't Need to Be Carried Alone:** Throughout the discussion, there was a mutual acknowledgment of the profound impact that being seen and supported can have.



New Year Intentions

Gentle Reminders for the Bereaved

I'm allowed to start where I am.

There is no timeline or need to rush forward with my grief.

I give myself permission to feel.

Even when life keeps asking me to move on.

I'm allowed to say their name.

My grief is not a burden.

Joy and grief can exist together.

Moments of lightness do not diminish love or loss.

I do not have to carry this alone.

Connection and support are part of healing.



Days of Reflection



January 1
New Years Day



January 27
International Holocaust
Remembrance Day



February 4
World Cancer Day



February 14
Valentine's Day



February 15
International
Childhood Cancer Day



February 28
Rare Disease Day



*These days may have added
meaning for some. We offer them
as gentle moments to pause &
care for yourself.*



PEER GRIEF COUNSELING

Serving Onondaga and Surrounding Counties In-Person

FIND COMFORT IN CONNECTION

Whether facing recent loss or navigating long-term grief, our Peer Grief Counseling Team offers a nurturing environment for individuals and families to find solace and strength on their journey toward healing.

- Free of charge
- Personalized
- Individuals / Family / Youth




PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

Family & Friends | Beyond the Empty House (for senior widows) | Left Behind by Suicide

Bereaved Parents & Grandparents (Infant/Newborn, Miscarriage or Stillbirth)

A Life Remembered (for bereaved parents of children older than 1)



FIND STRENGTH IN COMMUNITY

Our Peer Support Groups create a compassionate space for sharing and healing after loss, offering comfort and support from those who understand, led by trained facilitators. They provide:

- A non-judgmental environment
- Education about the effects of grief on the body
- A community of others who understand

Please call HOPE for more information on Groups and Peer Counseling
315-475-9675



Valentine's Day

12 Practical Tips for the Bereaved

Give Yourself Permission to Experience Your Grief

Acknowledge that this Valentine's Day will not be the same without your significant other. Allow yourself to feel whatever arises — sadness, longing, or even joy for having shared a loving relationship. All of it is part of healthy grieving.

Handle the Holiday in Whatever Way Feels Right to You

Spend the day alone in quiet reflection or surround yourself with family and friends. You may choose to continue Valentine's Day traditions — dinner out, favorite chocolates, a movie — or begin new ones. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to move through this day.

Honor Your Significant Other and Your Relationship

Death does not end love, only the way it is expressed. Consider gathering with those you trust to share memories, or create personal rituals that help maintain connection. Some ideas include:

- Visiting the cemetery and placing a rose or meaningful symbol while speaking aloud your thoughts and feelings
- Starting a Valentine's Day journal to write what you wish you could say
- Writing a letter or poem and releasing it outdoors
- Lighting a memorial candle near a photo and spending time remembering

Honor Your Relationship With Those Who Are Still Alive

Valentine's Day is not only for couples. It can be a time to express love to friends, family members, or chosen family. Simple gestures or heartfelt notes can remind you — and them — of meaningful connection.

Share Your Early Romance With Your Children

If you have children, share memories of the romantic side of their deceased parent. Look through photos and tell stories. This can be meaningful for both you and them.

Pamper Yourself

Treat yourself with comfort and care. Buy yourself flowers, take a bath, listen to music, dance, wear cozy clothes, or enjoy a favorite show or snack. Small comforts matter.

Spend Some Cuddle Time With An Animal Companion

If you have a pet, allow yourself extra moments of closeness. If not, visit someone who does. Unconditional affection can be deeply soothing.

Do Something Heartfelt for Someone Else

Keeping your heart open can be healing. Volunteer, visit someone who may be lonely, bring treats to work, or donate blood.

Redefine the Purpose of the Holiday

Rather than focusing on romantic expectations, consider Valentine's Day as an opportunity to express love in broader ways. Allow yourself to move at your own pace without pressure to begin a new relationship.

If You're Really Hurting, Plan Ahead

You do not have to go through this alone or pretend you are okay. Reach out to trusted friends, family, faith communities, professionals, or grief support centers.

Love Yourself

Acknowledge the love and effort you brought to your relationship. Consider listing qualities your loved one cherished about you, or writing down words they might offer you today. You may also choose a small gift as a gesture of self-compassion.

Seek Support if You Feel Overwhelmed

You do not have to go through this alone or pretend you are okay. Reach out to trusted friends, family, faith communities, professionals, or grief support centers.





COMMUNITY CORNER

CNY Author Shares her Story of Young Widowhood

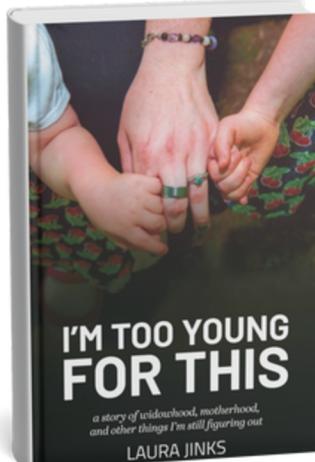
I'm Too Young for This is a memoir by CNY author Laura Jinks, who shares her experiences of learning to live with grief after the death of her husband, Bob.

Told through short and powerful stories, this book offers an intimate look at love, loss, and meaning making as Laura navigates widowhood and solo parenthood. Her writing is honest and accessible, capturing both the exhaustion of grief and the small moments of connection that help her keep going. Readers will find that Laura holds space for tears, tenderness, and moments of unexpected humor that allows grief and life to unfold side by side without rushing healing or offering neat conclusions.

***I'm Too Young For This*, offers the bereaved recognition and connection through shared experience. It may resonate especially with those who have loved and lost, who are parenting through grief, or who are searching for language that reflects what it feels like to keep going after loss.**



@cancerwidowvideos



I'm Too Young for This

a story of widowhood, motherhood, and other things I'm still figuring out

By: Laura Jinks

Release Date: January 20th, 2026



HOPE FOR BEREAVED PRESENTS

A LIFE REMEMBERED

***A support group for parents grieving a
child 1 year or older***

If you're a bereaved parent, join us to understand how grief effects your brain and body, learn skills you can use right away, and become part of a community of other bereaved parents who "get it".

**CONTACT US TODAY FOR
MORE INFORMATION**

315-475-9675
www.hopeforbereaved.com

8-WEEK CLOSED GROUP
LOCATED IN SYRACUSE
MUST ATTEND ALL SESSIONS

Something impactful here

When grief comes knocking, answer the door. Let her in.

Let her tell you all that was lost. Let her remind you how marvelous it was. Let her paint your memories in slow motion, let her sing your story with a cello. Let her teach you gratefulness and how to pay attention. Do not turn her away at the door. If you do, she will come back again knocking.

Let her speak her piece. Let her do her work, cleansing you of your tears. Then send her on her way. Then you can sleep through the night without waking from her tapping.

When Anger comes pounding, do not try to convince him that he has no right. Open the door and let him roar. Roar back. Roar together. Let Anger have his moment, his voice. Listen to him and be changed. Let him teach you about justice. Let him remind you of the difference between how things are and how they should be.

For if you don't, he will rage at the door all hours of the night. And you may think that it's someone you love who is causing your unrest. Anger will not leave until you hear him. So let him in; reason with him. Then open the door and send him on his way.

When Disappointment comes ringing the bell, invite her inside, and listen carefully. She will be a guide to reveal the secrets of your heart. To listen to Disappointment is to listen to your own dreams. She will show you the things you wish for, but don't yet have the courage to ask.

Do not turn her away, or she will be scratching at your windows. She will be ever-whispering. Let her say what she will, and she will leave you when her work is done.

Though they are not pleasant guests, these visitors come with gifts. Let them do their work. And once they have done it, open the door again, and say goodbye. And don't forget to smile and thank them for coming.

Nightbirde aka Jane Marczewski



Nightbirde

Is an American Singer/songwriter most famously known for her time spent on America's Got Talent in 2021 and her message of resilience in the face of terminal cancer.





SINGING. Soulutions

for PROCESSING
GRIEF & TRAUMA

Singing Soulutions

We're thrilled to welcome back Singing Soulutions! This 6-week program aids individuals coping with grief and trauma through body, breath, and voice exercises, using singing to foster emotional connection.

No prior experience is needed. It offers tools for navigating feelings safely, teaches 'music strategies' for home practice, and includes exploration of vocal techniques and group interaction each week.

[Visit singingsoulutions.org to register](http://singingsoulutions.org)



Rainbow Babies

Pregnancy after loss can evoke a complex mix of emotions—hope, fear, joy, and grief.

This 6-week art therapy group provides a supportive space to connect with others who understand, express your journey through creativity, and find calm through meditative art practices.

Email Lenadeleolcat@gmail.com to reserve your spot





4500 Onondaga Blvd.
Syracuse, NY 13219

Electronic Service Requested

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MISSION STATEMENT

HOPE for Bereaved, Inc. provides support groups, peer counseling, and resources at no charge to grieving Central New York youth, adults, families, and organizations.

Save the Date

2026

EVENTS

FRI
JUNE
5TH

Golf Tournament of HOPE
Sunset Ridge Golf Club



SAT
AUG
1ST

Remembrance 5K Run/Walk
Longbranch Park



FRI
OCT
23RD

Celebration of HOPE Gala
Palladian Hall at the Treasury



Help us keep our peer grief support services FREE
by participating in one of our signature events!

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Winter 2026

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