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Mission Statement

To provide quality end-of-life care at no expense to the patient, while supporting their family and others in the community who are experiencing grief.

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Dear friends,

Fall is here. It is time for all the holiday busyness. It is also time for some of the most difficult months of bereavement - the first holidays without—or perhaps it is the second or third Christmas, Thanksgiving, etc. you will spend without your loved one. Regardless of the time passed, this season can be difficult. Hospice has planned a few events to help take the edge off of the season.

The Surviving the Holidays workshop program is geared toward helping you minimize the stress that comes with grief during the season. We will discuss issues surrounding holiday grief and offer hints and tips for making it through this difficult period. Meeting will be held Friday, November 16th, 12:00 to 1:00 p.m., at the office of Hospice of North Central Oklahoma, Ponca City. A light lunch will be provided. All meetings are open to the public.

Our Annual Candle Lighting Memorial Service will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 1st, at the Carolyn Renfro Event Center, 445 Fairview Ave., Ponca City. Please plan on joining us for a time of remembrance and encouragement as we honor our deceased loved ones. The observance is open to anyone in the community who has experienced the death of a loved one. This is always a special occasion and one I know will bless you in your grief journey.

And Club Monarch Children's Grief Support meeting will be Wednesday, December 19th, 8:30 a.m. to noon. This is an activity filled bereavement learning experience for children ages 6 to 12. If you are interested please RSVP with Jessica at 762-9102. Pizza will be available for the kids.

I hope you can join us for one or more of our holiday support events. I am sure you will be blessed.

Sincerely,

Mike Sweetman

Coping with the Holidays

By Mike Sweetman

We are headed into the Holidays; Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc are upon us. With these come a multitude of expectations—cooking, shopping, entertaining, and such. These joyous holidays can seem burdensome when one is working through the grief after the loss of a loved one.

There is no way to stop the clock and make the holidays wait until we are ready to face them; however, there are things one can do to prepare and mitigate their effects on us while we are bereaved.

The first step is to fully grasp the problem. When we are grieving we use up tremendous amounts of emotional and mental energy just facing the reality of the loss. It is normal to feel depressed, lethargic, and detached from everyday life during grief. On the other hand, the holidays, expect more of us, mentally, emotionally, physically. Consider that everything will be more difficult when one is grieving.

Now, stop and look at the roles you usually play in the holiday observances. What do other people usually expect from you this time of year? Are you the primary cook? Is your home where all the family gathers? Who handles the bulk of the shopping in your family? Are you

expected to contribute to any parties at work, school, church, etc.? Do family expect to see your house all decorated, like they have in years past? We sometimes forget how involved we are until the holidays are upon us.

It is easy to see that the season is fraught with conflicts for the bereaved. There are the expectations of friends and family, unrealistic pressure we place on ourselves and, of course, plenty of conflicted emotions. How can one be “jolly” when the loss of a loved one is fresh on the mind. The holidays are also filled with painful reminders of the loss—that empty chair at the dinner table or that favorite Christmas carol of the deceased that just keeps playing on the radio.

Ask yourself what do I need this holiday season? Do I need to scale back on my usual involvement? What parts of the holidays will be most difficult for me? What things do I absolutely want to avoid? What do I need to tell others so they will understand things are different this year?

Next, make a plan for the upcoming weeks. Write it out, but keep it flexible.

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Our feelings and expectations change from day to day, and what seems important now may seem just burdensome at the time. The opposite is true as well, sometimes the anticipation of the holiday is worse than the day itself, and we feel more like being involved than we originally anticipated.

Remember to simplify. Things do not have to be elaborate or complicated to be meaningful and fun. Less can be more.

Communicate your needs to those around you. It is best to share your ideas and needs early before others get their expectations set. If you need to have someone else host dinner this year, talk this over early so others can prepare. Remember, it is healthy to express one's feelings and it is okay to ask for what you need. Consider that others in the family are also feeling the stress of the loss. In a grieving family there will be several different, even competing, expectations, and several different expressions of grief. Ask other family members for advice on how the family should celebrate, and especially consider the needs of those who were the most involved caregiv-

ers for the loved one. Bereavement is often hardest for those of us who take care of others, and it is easy for them to forget about their own needs.

Remember, it is okay to say "no." It is okay to ask for help. It is important to respect your needs and feelings, and to communicate them. It is okay to modify or even skip certain holiday traditions this year.

While considering a plan for the holidays, **plan some ways to include your loved one's memory in the season.** Consider setting aside a few moments at a family gathering to acknowledge the loss. It may be helpful to place a picture of the deceased in a prominent place in the home and place a votive candle near it. Or, set a place setting at the table in the place where your loved one always sat, and reserve it by placing a significant item in the chair. Remember, just because they are gone, does not mean your loved one must be forgotten, especially at a holiday celebration.

"Only people who are capable of loving strongly can also suffer great sorrow, but this same necessity of loving serves to counteract their grief and heals them."
— Leo Tolstoy

Help For The Journey: Teaching Our Children How To Grieve

By Cathy Denning, BSW

Did anyone ever teach you about grief and mourning as a child? If you first experienced grief as a child or in your teenage years, were you supported or was your loss, your feelings, your grief mostly ignored? If you are like most adults, you arrived to your first grief experience with very little preparation and perhaps even some misguided advice. It can be difficult to talk to our children about death and dying, grieving and mourning. Some questions that may arise are: "how much information do I give?" "when is the best time to talk about this subject?" and "where do I even start?"

One way to introduce the subject of death and grief is through books. One of my favorite books is "Gentle Willow" by Joyce C. Mills. This book is appropriate for the elementary school age child; however, I have also used it with preschool children, and middle school age children in group with good results.

"Gentle Willow" is a story about a Willow tree who is very sick and, despite all of her forest friends attempts at curing her, she dies. It is unique in that the book shares both the perspective of the Willow Tree as it faces death, as well as the forest friends who grieve the pending death of their friend. The characters in the book experience sadness, anger, disbelief, hope, and love. The book does

not attempt to explain what happens beyond death other than to say that each of the tree's friends "will recognize her in another way."

In addition to the story, there is a section for parents about children's feelings, and how to talk to your child about illness and death. Two exercises or activities for children who are sick are also included in this session; however, these activities can be easily adapted to use with any child as they deal with universal issues of pain and fear. Children are used to reading books and will likely engage in a discussion about the characters in a natural manner. As a parent, you may also encourage discussion by making comments about how you relate to what the characters are experiencing or how they are behaving.

Including our children in the grief process both before and after the death is good for their emotional health as well as your own. Hospice of North Central Oklahoma maintains a lending library for both adults and children. In addition, individual children's bereavement counseling, as well as family bereavement counseling, is available at no cost for all members of the communities we serve. Remember, support is always available for the journey.

Come join us, hear your loved one's name read, and light a votive candle in their memory as we honor the lives of patients and others in the community who have been part of our story over the past year.



Hospice of North Central Oklahoma ANNUAL CANDLE LIGHTING MEMORIAL SERVICE

Saturday, December 1, 2018
At 2:00 p.m.

Carolyn Renfro Event Center
445 Fairview Ave. Ponca City

(Please enter through the doors on the south end of the building)

Bereavement Tip

Catalogues can be a convenient way to do the holiday gift buying when the impact of grief leaves one not wanting to get out and face the crowds. The Internet is also a good option for secluded shopping. But be warned, you need to order in time for shipping before Christmas!

If you do go out to shop, take a friend with you. They can help keep you from overspending, which many bereaved people do, as well as be a companion if Christmas music makes you tear up. The best advice of all is probably just to get your shopping done early, before the holiday rush sets in.

Lunch Bunch

Will Meet
Twice each Month, at 11:30 a.m.
at local restaurants.
Locations vary from month to
month! See the calendar
on page 6.

You are always welcome to join us at Lunch Bunch. We are an informal gathering of folks who have experienced grief, but we are certainly not sad or somber, just friendly!

Come be one
of the Bunch!





445 Fairview Ave
Ponca City, OK 74601

Bereavement News

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November 2018

Daylight Savings Time Ends, Sunday, November 4, 2:00 a.m. Turn clocks back 1 hour.

Lunch Bunch, Tuesday, November 6, 11:30 a.m. Los Portales Mexican Restaurant, 900 E. Prospect, Ponca City.

Alzheimer's Discussion Series, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., "10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's," Hospice Office 445 Fairview Ave. Ponca City. Light Lunch Provided.

Surviving the Holidays Workshop, Friday, November 16, 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. Hospice office, 445 Fairview Ave. Ponca City. Light lunch will be provided. Please RSVP at 762-9102.

Thanksgiving Holiday, Thursday and Friday. November 22 and 23. Hospice office will be closed both days.

Lunch Bunch, Tuesday, November 27, 11:30 a.m., Pizza Hut, 2301 N. 14th, Ponca City.

Brown Bag Lunch and Learn, 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. "Cremation Demystified,"

Hospice office 445 Fairview Ave., Ponca City.

December 2018

Annual Candle Lighting Memorial Service. Saturday, December 1, 2:00 p.m. at the Carolyn Renfro Center, 445 Fairview Ave. Ponca City.

Lunch Bunch, Tuesday, December 4, 11:30 a.m., Ground Round Restaurant, 5th and Prospect, Ponca City.

Alzheimer's Discussion Series, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., "Dementia Conversations," Hospice office 445 Fairview Ave, Ponca City. Light lunch will be provided .

Lunch Bunch, Tuesday, December 18, 11:30 a.m. Pizza Hut, 2301 N. 14th, Ponca City.

Club Monarch Support Group for Children ages 6-12, Wednesday, December 19, 8:30 a.m.-noon. Hospice office, 445 Fairview Ave. Ponca City. Please RSVP to Jessica at 762-9102.

Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25. Hospice office will be closed.

January 2019

New Years Day, Tuesday, January 1, Hospice Office will be closed.

Lunch Bunch, Tuesday, January 8, 2019, 11:30 a.m., Enrique's Mexican Restaurant, at the Ponca City Airport, 2213 N. Waverly, Ponca City.

Lunch Bunch, Tuesday, January 22, 11:30 a.m. Pizza Hut, 2301 N. 14th, Ponca City.

Brown Bag Lunch and Learn, 12:00 to 1:00 p.m., "Funeral Planning," Hospice office, 445 Fairview Ave., Ponca City.