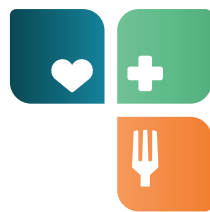


Sharing the Journey



Visiting Nurse
Association

Meals on Wheels
Hospice & Palliative Care

A BEREAVEMENT PUBLICATION OF VNA HOSPICE CARE

Coping with Anxiety in Grief

By Susan Bryan, MA, LPC - VNA Bereavement Coordinator - Collin

You are reading this because you are grieving the death of someone very close to you, someone you loved very much. The death of someone we love is scary and stressful. We feel helpless and uncertain, and wonder if we can go on living without them. We don't know what the future looks like without them, and we don't know how to fill the void in our lives that their death has caused.

At the same time, we are living through a global pandemic filled with uncertainty, fear and isolation. Most of us in this COVID time have a heightened awareness of possible infection and danger. We are also experiencing common feelings and reactions in grief – deep sadness, exhaustion, lethargy, loneliness, anger, regret, and anxiety. Living in this COVID time can intensify our fear and anxiety as we grieve.

It is so important to be gentle with yourself and take care of yourself. Take time to rest, to grieve and cry as you need to. Do what is soothing and calming that helps bring you peace and comfort. When we are stressed or scared, we forget to breathe, or we breathe very shallowly. Take time to just sit, with feet firmly on the ground, and breathe slowly and deeply from your diaphragm. Set a timer if you are afraid you will fall asleep. Play soft music, light a candle, close your eyes or chose a focal point to look at while you pay attention to your breathing. Other things

to do when you are feeling anxious include taking a warm bath, listening to peaceful and calming music, and going outside and paying attention to the beauty around you. When you are feeling fearful and alone, reach out and talk with family and close friends who “get” your sadness and grief.

Sometimes the fear and anxiety are heightened and turn into panic attacks. These sudden and intense events seem to come out of nowhere, so it's important to know what contributes to these episodes. When we are anxious, we have physical symptoms such as shortness of breath, heart palpitations, chest pressure, dizziness, nausea, weakness and tense muscles.

When you are experiencing severe stress and anxiety, there are some simple practices that can make a difference as you deal with your fear:

- Practice deep breathing and feeling your feet firmly on the ground. Stay focused and feel grounded in the present moment. Make a list of the things that make you nervous and fearful – situations, places, people, certain times of the day or week.
- Examine your thoughts about these stressful situations. What are you telling yourself when you feel anxious? (Examples - “I won't be able to make it without my loved one”, “I will be all alone”, I can't handle everything I have to do.”)

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The Visiting Nurse Association Hospice Care Bereavement Staff hope the information in this quarterly newsletter will comfort, educate, and support you in your time of grief.

FALL 2021

Coping with Anxiety in Grief

By Susan Bryan, LPC, VNA Bereavement Coordinator (cont.)

- When your thoughts spin like this into anxiousness, catch yourself, and replace the fearful thoughts with positive and strong thoughts and affirmations: “I am strong”, “I can do this”, “I am not alone”, “I will get through this”.
- Practice. It takes a while to recognize and replace your anxious thoughts with positive thoughts. With practice it will become easier and will help you journey through grief in healthier and calmer ways.
- Consider what you might change about these times, places and situations to make them less anxiety-producing. Consider what you might decide to do differently, or eliminate, that will help with your anxiety and stress.

- Do what works for you. Do what helps bring you comfort, peace and calm.

Know that we are all created to be resilient in the face of sadness and stress. You will make it through the grief you are experiencing now. Your grief will get less intense. It will get better. If you are having extreme panic attacks that are concerning to you or your loved ones, it's important to seek professional help. Please reach out to us if we can help support you in your grief process.

For further reading on this subject, we recommend *Anxiety: The Missing Stage of Grief – A Revolutionary Approach to Understanding and Healing the Impact of Loss* by Claire Bidwell Smith, LCPC.



The Sacrament of Waiting *Seasons of Your Heart* by Macrina Wiederkehr

Slowly
she celebrated the sacrament of letting go.
First she surrendered her green,
then the orange, yellow, and red
finally she let go of her brown.
Shedding her last leaf
she stood empty and silent, stripped bare.
Leaning against the winter sky
she began her vigil of trust.

Shedding her last leaf
she watched its journey to the ground.
She stood in silence
wearing the color of emptiness,
her branches wondering;
How do you give shade with so much gone?

And then,
the sacrament of waiting began.
The sunrise and sunset watched with
tenderness.
Clothing her with silhouettes
they kept her hope alive.

They helped her understand that
her vulnerability,
her dependence and need,
her emptiness,
her readiness to receive
were giving her a new kind of beauty.
Every morning and every evening they stood
in silence
and celebrated together
the sacrament of waiting.

Grief & The Holiday Season During the Pandemic

By Susan Bryan, MA, LPC - VNA Bereavement Coordinator - Collin

The holidays are coming, and you are grieving and trying to survive this pandemic time. It's overwhelming. The grief process is already filled with grief-related pain and symptoms—emotional, physical, cognitive, social, and spiritual—and now you're having to deal with the stresses and anxiety of Covid-19 and the Holidays approaching. How do you cope with it all?

Stay safe – Wear a mask, even around close family and friends. Be careful where you plan to go and gather with others.

Take care of yourself – Eat and sleep well, take time to rest and to play, get outside, exercise, and take walks.

Reach out to family and friends - Talk about your grief, your sadness in missing your loved one, your anxiety and stress.

Use Zoom, Skype, Face time - Spend time with family and friends when you can't be together in person.

Simplify plans for the holidays – Do what's most important for you, feel a sense of

comfort, peace, and even joy.

Change traditions to what you can handle this year, and in ways that will bring you comfort and peace. You don't have to do it all, as usual, keep it simple and meaningful.

Remember your loved one – Have a place for them at the table, eat their favorite food, share cherished memories and stories of them, say their favorite prayers, poem or quotes, or play their favorite music.

Find new ways to connect with the spiritual meaning of the Holidays – By lighting candles, sacred reading, listening to peaceful and spiritual music, watching meaningful programs, and finding new ways to bring joy to others.

Buy a gift for yourself that your loved one would want you to have and/or buy a gift for your loved one and give or donate it to someone else.

Remember what your loved one would want for you - To stay healthy and connected to others as you move forward in the grief journey.

*No one ever told me that
grief felt so like fear.*
– C. S. Lewis



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For more information, email gethelp@vnatexas.org or contact your local VNA branch:

Visiting Nurse Association Locations

VNA Headquarters & Dallas Branch

1420 W. Mockingbird Lane, Suite 700
Dallas, TX 75247
(214) 689-0000

Sue Rafferty (214) 689-2922
rafferts@vnatexas.org

Counties Served: Dallas and Tarrant

Collin Branch

7290 Virginia Parkway, Suite 2300
McKinney, Texas 75071
(972) 562-0140

Susan Bryan (972) 562-0140
bryans@vnatexas.org

Counties Served: Collin, Fannin and Grayson

East Texas Branch

874 Ed Hall Drive, Suite 105
Kaufman, TX 75142
(972) 962-7500

Kevin Moore (972) 962-7500
moorek@vnatexas.org

*Counties Served: Ellis, Henderson, Hunt,
Kaufman, Rockwall & Van Zandt with parts
of Johnson and Navarro*

VNA Ann's Haven

2800 Shoreline Dr., Suite 250
Denton, TX 76210
(940) 349-5900

Jerald Garner (214) 546-8544
garnerj@vnatexas.org

*Counties Served: Denton, Tarrant, Wise and
parts of Cooke*

VNA encourages family members to wait a minimum of one year following the death of a loved one before serving as a hospice patient care volunteer or bereavement support volunteer.

VNA Grief Care Calendar for Fall 2021

VNA bereavement events provide an opportunity for bereaved individuals to meet with others who understand loss and learn more about helping themselves.
Please reach out to your Bereavement Coordinator for more information or support.

To inquire or register, contact the Bereavement Coordinator for information or support.

Dallas County

Grief Support Group (loss of any loved ones)

4th Thursdays, October 28
3rd Thursdays, November 18 and December 16
Held on Zoom, Noon to 1:00 p.m.
Sign ups are due by 3 p.m. the day before
Zoom link will be sent out before the meeting.

Grieving Well

Wednesday, October 20
Held on Zoom, 10 a.m. to Noon
Sign ups are due by 3 p.m. the day before
Zoom link will be sent out before the meeting.

Healing for the Holidays

Focusing on coping with grief during the holidays.
Held on Zoom - RSVP is required
Friday, November 12, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Sign ups are due by 3 p.m. the day before

Sharing the Journey: Coping With Grief

6 Week group - Wednesdays, Starting Jan. 12 to Feb. 29, 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Group may be held at Dallas office, or online; TBD
1420 W. Mockingbird Ln., Suite 700,
Dallas, TX 75247
RSVP to Sue Rafferty

Contact Sue Rafferty to RSVP and sign up at
(972) 215-6128 or rafferts@vnatexas.org

Denton County

No events planned at this time. Please see information about Zoom grief groups being held in Dallas that you are welcome to attend.

Contact Jerald Garner for information in the Denton area at (940) 349-5900 or
garnerj@vnatexas.org

Collin County

Grieving Hearts Group (loss of spouse)

2nd Tuesdays, Oct. 12, Nov. 9, Dec. 14
10:00 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.
Held in-person, with face masks required.
First United Methodist Church,
Allen, 601 S. Greenville Ave., Allen, TX.
Sign ups are due by 3 p.m. the day before

Grief Support Group (loss of any loved ones)

4th Tuesdays, October 26
Held on Zoom, 10:00 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.
Sign ups are due by 3 p.m. the day before

Healing for the Holidays

Focusing on coping with grief during the holidays.
Held on Zoom - RSVP is required
Tuesday, November 16, 10–11:30 a.m.
Sign ups are due by 3 p.m. the day before

Sharing the Journey: Coping with Grief

Please let Susan know if you are interested in attending Sharing The Journey - 6 week group. Starting late Jan. or early Feb. on Zoom, Wednesday mornings.

Contact Susan Bryan to sign up at
(214) 733-5543 or bryans@vnatexas.org

Kaufman County

No events planned at this time. Please see information about Zoom grief groups being held in Dallas that you are welcome to attend.

Contact Kevin Moore for information in the Kaufman area (972) 962-7500 or
moorek@vnatexas.org

Grief Resources for Fall 2021

VNA bereavement events provide an opportunity for bereaved individuals to meet with others who understand loss and learn more about helping themselves. We will resume our in-person grief events when our medical staff deems it safe to do so. We are holding some on-line Zoom Grief Groups. **Please reach out to your Bereavement Coordinator for more information or support.**

Dallas: Sue Rafferty – 214-689-2922 | rafferts@vnatexas.org

Collin: Susan Bryan – 214-733-5543 | bryans@vnatexas.org

Denton: Jerald Garner – 940-349-5900 | garnerj@vnatexas.org

Kaufman: Kevin Moore – 972-962-7500 | moorek@vnatexas.org

Online Grief Support Groups

www.faithandgrief.org/gatherings – A local faith-based organization that is currently holding online grief meetings.

www.griefshare.org – A faith-based grief program that uses video lessons and discussion groups. Many of its groups are being done online; check their website to find ones near you.

<https://www.thewidowsjourney.org/> – Dallas organization for widows that holds support meetings online.

Helpful Websites for Loss and Grief

www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/grief – Listing of private practice counselors and therapists in your area who specialize in grief and loss (VNA doesn't endorse these, but is only sharing this website info if it is helpful to you)

www.aftertalk.com – Website with articles, blog, resource center, and an "ask Dr. Robert Niemeyer" column, with space for writing private conversations to loved ones and archiving memories

www.centerforloss.com – Links to books and articles by grief counselor and educator Alan Wolfelt, PhD.

www.grief.com – Website with videos and info from grief expert and educator Dr. David Kessler.

www.thegrieftoolbox.com – A place for grief tools, where people can find the grief resources they need. Includes links to articles, videos, support group finder.

www.whatsyourgrief.com – Website about many aspects of coping with grief

www.widownet.org – Information and self-help resources for widows and widowers, discussion boards.

www.griefhealing.com – Website with extensive quotes/poems section, articles on loss and pet loss, discussion groups.

www.healgrief.org – Social support network providing resources and support for coping with grief.

www.opentohope.com – Online resource center that includes community forums and articles, podcasts, and videos on a wide variety of grief-related topics.

www.ourhouse-grief.org/grief-pages (has Spanish resources) – Grief articles in English and Spanish

www.connect.legacy.com – Online support groups, articles, blogs, resources, and more.

www.forums.grieving.com – Forums for different kinds of losses and grief issues.

www.hubpages.com/health/grief-loss-bereavement – Extensive website about grief and loss with many links to grief-related articles.