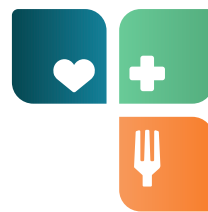


Sharing the Journey



Visiting Nurse Association

Meals on Wheels
Hospice & Palliative Care

A BEREAVEMENT PUBLICATION OF VNA HOSPICE CARE

Shared Challenges with Loss and Grief During COVID Time

By Kimberly Mackay-Pearson, MS, LMT – VNA Denton Bereavement Coordinator

I've been fortunate to have wonderful conversations over the phone with recently bereaved family members in my new role as bereavement coordinator here at Visiting Nurse Association Ann's Haven Hospice in Denton. What I have been hearing the most in this time is a disappointment because we were not able to be with our dying loved ones, or gather to mourn with family and friends at funerals, celebrations of life, and memorial services.

I'm going through that too. Twenty-seven years ago, our family moved to the remote area of northern New Hampshire. As with other small towns all across the nation, we were welcomed in the most heartfelt of ways - coffee for us and the movers, invitations to join the PTA, and offers to be shown around the town and local environs. Our neighbor across the street was a wonderful elementary school teacher with a creative and artistic flair and penchant for long hikes in the surrounding mountains.

Annie was an instant friend who shared with me all her knowledge of local flora and fauna. Even when I moved, first to South Carolina and then to Texas, we remained steadfast

friends. However far afield I roamed from friends and family, we always maintained a stash of funds to be able to jump on a plane, hop in the car or buy a bus ticket to attend weddings, babysit friends' kids, hold the hand of the sick, or attend a funeral.

Annie has fought an almost decade-long fight with breast cancer and up until recently held the upper hand, much like many of the family members of the families we serve.

Seven months ago, I would have cracked into the stash, hopped a plane for Boston, boarded a bus for the White Mountains, and wrapped my decades-old friend in a giant hug, held her hand in silence, or laughed at some silly remembrance.

I can't do that now, like many of our families have experienced.

There is a better chance than not that my dear friend will succumb to her disease, and I won't be able to gather with her family and our friends to celebrate her life. We are here for you in this shared time of COVID to muddle through this new way. We care, and we understand your pain, loss, and grief.

Together we can find a new, unexpected way and share the journey. Please reach out to us if we can help support you in your grief.



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.

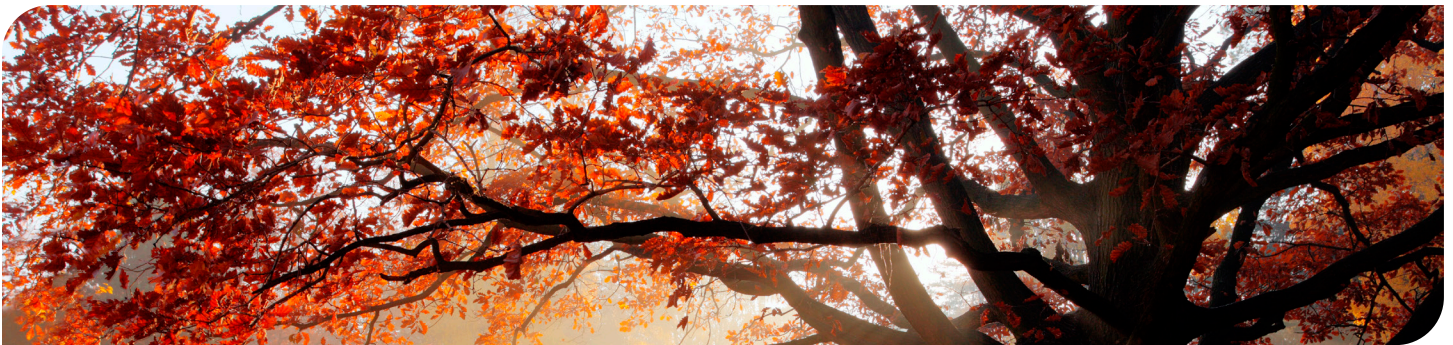
FALL 2020

Seasonal Sorrow

Author Unknown

It comes and goes,
as the cold snow blows,
drifting aimlessly
until piling on my heart.
Anger, sadness,
pain and guilt,
all gifts I bring unwillingly
as the holidays impart.
I try to hide
my grieving heart
beneath gifts and decorations,
but eventually, they come apart.
The holiday season
comes on quick
and leaves just as fast.

Although seasons and grief depart,
they linger in the heart.



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.

Helping North Texans Age With Dignity Since 1934

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.

*Remembering is an act of resurrection,
each repetition a vital layer of mourning, in
memory of those we are sure to meet again.*
– Nancy Cobb, in In Lieu of Flowers



**To honor your loved ones
during the holidays.**

**For more information, visit
www.vnatexas.org/lightupalife
or call Cheryl Jones at
(214) 689-2682**

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VNA Hospice Care Calendar for Fall 2020

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: Kimberly Mackay-Pearson – 214-263-1916 | Kimberly.mackaypearson@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.

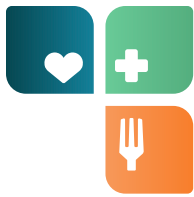
www.opentohope.com – Online resource center that includes community forums and articles, podcasts, and videos on a wide variety of grief-related topics.

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.



Visiting Nurse Association

Meals on Wheels
Hospice & Palliative Care

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Dallas, Texas 75247

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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

Kimberly Mackay-Pearson (940) 349-5900

Kimberly.mackaypearson@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.