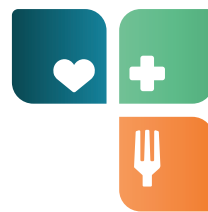


Sharing the Journey



Visiting Nurse Association

Meals on Wheels
Hospice & Palliative Care

A BEREAVEMENT PUBLICATION OF VNA HOSPICE CARE

Seeking Balance After Loss

Susan Bryan, LPC, is a former Bereavement Coordinator, Collin Branch

After the loss of a close loved one, your life has been changed forever. Yet the love and the memories you have with your loved one will last a lifetime. How do you go on living when someone you love so much has died?

There are many ways to look at the grief process. One newer theory about coping with grief is The Dual Process Model of Coping with Grief by Stroebe and Schut. It maintains that there are two types of tasks that must be dealt with as we grieve, loss-oriented tasks and restoration-oriented tasks. These grief experts recognize the necessity of both dealing with the emotions of loss and grief, and taking care of practical needs and life tasks as you move forward into a new normal. They also take into account that there are times you need to take a break or seek respite. They write that healthy grieving is a dynamic process of dealing with the loss and avoiding the loss. This process can be compared to an oscillating fan, going back and forth. This oscillating is part of a healthy grieving process.

Grievors will move back and forth between

- Tending to the things that need to happen

after a death and taking breaks from the pain and grief

- Looking back and remembering and looking forward to the future
- Dealing with all the negative emotions of your grief and seeking the positive in your situation and changes you might make
- Being alone to grieve and being with others for care and support

A time of loss can be full of contradictions.

Sometimes all you can do is think about the days and hours leading to your loved one's death, the memories, the lost hopes and dreams, the good times, and all you have lost. You may feel like you're going crazy with the many emotions that are part of grieving, including deep sadness, anger, regret, fear and loneliness. Other times you feel relieved that your

loved one has died and is not suffering anymore. Sometimes it feels like you're in a fog, unable to concentrate, focus or make decisions. You may want to be alone in your grief, to remember and process your memories and sadness. Alternately, you may want to be with family members and friends who care about you and will support you.

There are times you have tasks you must accomplish: getting the death certificate,



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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.

WINTER 2026

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probate, closing accounts, paperwork, etc. In focusing on your future, you might be tempted to make drastic changes, such as moving, selling everything, getting remarried, or quitting your job. Caution: Go slow before making any big changes after



your love one dies; your ability to make good decisions is affected by the emotions of grief.

There are also times you need to take a break from thinking about the past, your loss, your grief. You just want to lie in bed with the covers over your head, or sit and play a mindless game, or watch a silly show on TV. You might go out with friends to have some fun and laugh, and then you might feel guilty for having a good time.

It's important to do the essential grief work to deal with emotions and to rebuild your life. It's also important to take care of yourself and take rests from all the stress and pain. It's normal to oscillate between grief-oriented and restoration-oriented tasks, and also to take a break from both.

Remember that grief is a journey, it is not a race. Take it one day at a time; slowly and surely. When you attend to your grief, the intense grief will lessen. You will find yourself looking ahead to the future, with hope and anticipation. Adjusting to the loss of your loved one is not easy, but it is part of the journey, and worth the work and the wait.

The writer of Ecclesiastes states it well:

For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;...
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, 4

While the experience of grief work is difficult and slow and wearing, it also is enriching and fulfilling. The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep, loving concern.

-- Roy and Jane Nichols

"Funerals: A Time for Grief and Growth" in The Hope Line Newsletter, July 2001, Syracuse, NY

ONLINE SUPPORT

For additional grief resources, please visit VNA's website at: vnatexas.org

Or scan QR code with your smartphone.



A QR reader can be installed from either Google or iTunes. Once installed simply scan the code and it will take you to the website.

Expressing Grief through Art

Julie L. Espey, LMSW, Certified Art Therapist

It was a cold empty afternoon. I sat there staring out the window in a daze. I was thinking about my mother, who passed away six months earlier. I suddenly was aware of my four year old tapping my knee...."Here, Mama." She held out a little crinkled paper with a silver and pink angel that she had created. "It's o-kay, Mom...One day you'll be old and go to heaven too." I couldn't help but laugh. My little four year old was consoling me.

I kept my little angel, because it reminds me how a child can tell his or her story through art. Art is a natural way for children to communicate. Art allows a child to express feelings of sadness, anger, anxiety, pain, and fear. A child may feel abandoned by both the deceased loved one as well as the surviving parent, since many times parents are overwhelmed with their own grief. Art can be used for children as well as the whole family. If you are unfamiliar with child art, you may want to keep in mind that it is not about the product. Allow the child to explore grief and loss through the process. Child art is delightful, and once children know that their work is not being judged or criticized they often become willing to share their innermost thoughts and feelings. It is important not to ask "What is it?" or to offer your interpretations. Children can be encouraged by saying "I like the color you're using." or "You're working really hard on that." Listen to their cues.

It is important to consider the child's age when selecting art projects as well as materials. Children will naturally gravitate towards a medium they are used to or comfortable exploring. Here are some art projects that can be used with a child or together as a family:

- Draw the first thing that comes to mind. Use large paper (18"x 24") and markers. You can also do a shared drawing. Encourage journals if age appropriate, or make a journal together. A journal with no lines allows room for creativity.
- Finger Paint! It's great, messy and wonderful! Put on some old clothes and use lots of newspaper. You can start with themes such as: "Our happy memory with....." or "Sad, to me, looks like....." Paint feelings.
- Collages are wonderful. Use tons of old magazines and just tear away. If the child is fairly young, you might want to have pre-cut images. Use pictures or words that "speak" to you. A family poster can be made. A memory box can be made with collage. Inside the box you can put special items, special pictures or even special words that were once said by your loved one.
- Playdough works fine, and clay, even better. Cover the your work surface with paper or plastic. You can roll, cut, pinch and poke the clay. Plastic utensils will come in handy. You can use themes if you want, such as: "My family today." or "An image of my loved one."
- Pillow making. You can use clothes from your loved one and create a memory pillow. Fabric glue works wonders. Some people use clothes to make a stuffed animal or a teddy bear.



Art projects are limitless. A little creativity goes a long way. Most importantly, allow children to experience their own grief. Acknowledge their feelings and listen ever so carefully. We hope these suggestions will be comforting and helpful. If you would like more information and support in caring for bereaved children, please contact our bereavement staff.

Texas' First & Most Experienced Hospice Provider

VNA Grief Care Calendar for Winter 2026

Visiting Nurse Association Hospice is holding various grief support meetings. Some of our groups are in-person, and some on the Zoom platform. Our bereavement events are open to families and friends of VNA patients, as well as to adults from the community, and offered free of charge.

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

Online Grief Support (on Zoom)

Lunchtime Grief Support

Lunchtime grief support meetings provide an opportunity to hear a practical program about some aspect of the grief process, with time for questions and discussion.

Third Tuesday each month,

Noon to 1 pm on Zoom: February 17, March 17, April 21, and May 19, 2026.

Zoom link is <https://vnatexas.zoom.us/j/81039615728?pwd=TKo3YDenKxDC0mDtRG9KApNhW1Ciyj.1> Meeting ID: 810 3961 5728 Passcode: 902947

For more information contact Elizabeth Barr, MA, MDiv, MT-BC at elizabeth.barr@vnatexas.org, 214-616-1904.

Monthly Grief Support in partnership with Methodist Hospital "Generations."

Meetings are held on the second Monday each month, 1 - 2 pm, on Zoom.

February 9, March 9, April 13, and May 11, 2026. You will need to register with the Generations program to access the Zoom session. Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/92980366396>

Meeting ID is 929 8036 6396

Contact Elizabeth Barr, MA, MDiv, MT-BC elizabeth.barr@vnatexas.org, 214-616-1904.

Spanish Grief Support Group

For more information call Belle Rodriguez at 214-208-8742 or belle.rodriguez@vnatexas.org

Para más información llama a Belle Rodríguez al 214-208-8742 o

belle.rodriguez@vnatexas.org

Please feel free to contact us for more information or for bereavement resources. There are other support groups we can recommend if our times do not work for you.

Grief Resources for Winter 2026

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: Elizabeth Barr, MA, MDiv, MT-BC – 214-616-1904 | elizabeth.barr@vnatexas.org

Collin and Denton: Elizabeth Barr, MA, MDiv, MT-BC – 214-616-1904 | elizabeth.barr@vnatexas.org

Kaufman: Kevin Moore, MDiv – 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.

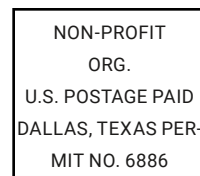
www.opentohope.com – Online resource center that includes community forums and articles, podcasts, and videos on a wide variety of grief-related topics.

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.



1420 W. Mockingbird Ln., Suite 700
Dallas, Texas 75247

vnatexas.org



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

Elizabeth Barr (214) 616-1904
elizabeth.barr@vnatexas.org

Counties Served: Dallas and Tarrant

Collin Branch

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

Elizabeth Barr (214) 616-1904
elizabeth.barr@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

Elizabeth Barr (214) 616-1904
elizabeth.barr@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.