Welcome to the summer edition of the Caring Connections newsletter.

Like many of you, we are saddened by news of the many preventable deaths in our community, our State and in our Nation. We are concerned about the growing epidemic of deaths by drug overdose. Utah presently ranks 5th in the nation in deaths by drug overdose and the resulting sorrow to families and friends is a secondary epidemic. Beginning with our fall grief support group series, we will be adding a support group for those grieving a death by drug overdose. Caring Connections has received funding from the University of Utah Educational Resource Development Council to develop this program. On September 30, we will be offering a half day conference on the unique grief of death by drug overdose for community professionals who, like us, respond to this suffering every day. More details on the grief group and the conference are found within the newsletter.

I would also like to express our appreciation to Larkin Mortuary, longtime supporter of many of our programs. Few people recognize that Caring Connections is a small non-profit organization within the College of Nursing, and relies on donor support. Fundamental to our mission is a commitment to never turn away any person for lack of ability to pay the $50 cost to participate in a grief support group. Larkin Mortuary has generously funded our scholarship fund to enable us to honor this commitment. We are grateful for their kindness.

It often seems like sorrow is unrelenting. We are confident that, in joining together with those who understand, experiencing non-judgmental support and state of the art bereavement care, a new life can emerge. That new life can honor the memory of those who have died. That is our mission, and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve you.

Kathie Supiano

“Tell me, O older and wiser sister,” I wrote, “how long will this grief last?” Old and wiser, she wrote back: “Grief is never over. The time will come when you control your grief rather than the other way around. You’ll draw upon those memories when you need and want them, rather than having them show up uninvited. But your grief will never go away, which is the way it should be. It is part of who you are.”

—Fenton Johnson

“If you want to heal, heal others. Then smile or weep at this happy reversal of fate.”

—Muriel Barbery

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SALT LAKE CITY
Wednesday, September 7th and ends on Wednesday, October 26th
from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm
Weekly meetings on Wednesday evenings for 8 weeks
University of Utah College of Nursing
Annette Poulson Cumming Building
10 South 2000 East

MIDVALE
Thursday, September 8th and ends on Thursday, October 27th
from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm
Weekly meetings on Thursday evenings for 8 weeks
UUHC Greenwood Health Center
7495 South State Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84047

OREM
Wednesday, September 7th and ends on Wednesday, October 26th
from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm
Weekly meetings on Wednesday evenings for 8 weeks
University of Utah Parkway Health Center
145 West University Parkway
Orem, UT 84058

LAYTON
Adult grief group for those adjusting to the suicide death of someone close beginning Monday, October 17th and ends on
Monday, December 12th from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm
The group will meet at Jessie Jeans Coffee House
(which is closed while the group meets) at
5128 South 1900 West in Roy, Utah

SPANISH GRIEF GROUPS
Call Caring Connection for more Information 801-585-9522
University Neighborhood Partners
1060 South 900 West
Salt Lake City, UT 84104

To register for any class or location, please call 801.585.9522.
There is a participation fee of $50.
If this fee is a hardship, please notify Caring Connections. Scholarships are available through the generous support of Larkin Mortuary.
Should there not be enough people registered for a particular group, the group may be postponed.

Caring Connections Advisory Board
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Design/Layout
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Dr. Supiano is doing a study on complicated grief in those who have lost a loved one to suicide and for caregivers who have lost a loved one to Alzheimer’s or dementia. I was accepted as a researcher in the University of Utah Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP). My research focuses on the enrollment process for participants in these two research studies. A clinical feature of complicated grief that poses challenges in recruitment and retention of research participants is avoidant behavior. Dr. Supiano and I have developed an enhanced enrollment interview process using in-person participant interviews and a post-intervention interview process with additional open-ended questions regarding the intervention experience to evaluate the impact on participant retention and identify the characteristics of the intervention that are perceived as the most and least helpful to participants. Though the study is still in progress we have learned a lot about avoidance and its impact on enrollment and have found that our enhanced recruitment strategies have provided reassurance to participants. The post intervention interviews have been very successful as well by providing a place where participants felt comfortable sharing stories of their new life as well as reflecting on their experiences with the intervention. I am so grateful for the opportunity to have Dr. Supiano as my mentor in this research and am so eager to see how our enrollments and interviewing process impacts participants with complicated grief.

Kathie Supiano adds, “In April, Christina presented her preliminary study findings at the UROP Poster session (shown) and at the Center on Aging Research Retreat. Christina received the Undergraduate Student Researcher of the Year Award from the College of Nursing.”

While it is a tried and true cliché, grief is a unique journey. Carri Lyons’s personal narrative about her heartbreaking journey through the loss of a child and the future hope of a biological child destroyed as a result of ovarian cancer would be enough to make anyone give up and bury their head in a hole. Not Carri: her sweet, funny, often frustrating and very personal story illustrates that even when the days seem darkest you have to keep moving, push yourself forward, and look for the bright spots.

An endearing, supportive spouse and friends, the guidance and professional help from Caring Connections (not mentioned but referenced in the book), and the incredibly dedicated staff at Huntsman Cancer Institute helped Carri find her way back to a “new” normal. A different life than that once imagined but the start a new chapter with the joyful promise of their beautiful adopted child, Hope. I challenge anyone to come away from this short easy read without a glimmer of understanding that while everyone’s story is unique, what matters most is that you keep true to yourself. Trust that your experience has meaning and purpose. I hope you enjoy this book as much as I did.
I had the opportunity to be a student co-facilitator in the suicide loss survivor support group. I am currently a Doctoral student at the University of Utah in the Doctor of Nursing Practice/Family Nurse Practitioner program. I have learned a great deal working with my professional facilitator, Ann Hutton. She is a wonderful Nurse Practitioner, she is very caring and compassionate, and responds to the individual needs of the group. I was able to learn from her how suicide loss survivors process their complicated grief, how best to communicate what they are feeling and how to help them process those feelings.

I became involved in Caring Connections because of my own loss. I lost my brother to suicide in September of 2015. I have since learned so much about grief and suicide, I have learned to be more understanding, more loving, and more compassionate towards people contemplating suicide as well as suicide loss survivors. I would like to share with others what I have learned through this process. I want to share that there is hope, there is healing and there is life after suicide loss. Grief is universal, we all will experience grief at some time. I have learned that many of us experience the same emotions when it comes to grief. We all go through things at different times, and we deal with our grief differently. This experience will affect my professional work in the future. I hope to work in a Family Practice Clinic in a rural area where I can use the skills that I have learned through Caring Connections. I hope to have gained more understanding about depression and how people go down the path to suicide, and hopefully be able to help these individuals in my clinic before it is too late. I also will use what I have learned from these groups to give better support to those who have lost loved ones to tragedies.

My husband had early onset Lewy Body Dementia. It was a confusing time as we first sought to get a diagnosis and then find the help we would need as the disease progressed. I often felt I was losing him over and over again each day. He died less than a month after our 45th wedding anniversary and his 67th birthday. While I felt relief for him to be released from his body and earthly cares, I had no idea how daunting the task would be to live without him.

My sister had participated in a Caring Connections grief group a few years ago, after her husband passed away. She told me how helpful the group was for her in understanding the grief process, and she encouraged me to get involved with a group. The first session I attended, I felt discouraged. My children asked how group was and I replied, “Okay.” I felt like I had met several other older ladies, like myself, who had all experienced an incredibly painful loss and were lonely. I read the first chapters in the manual and went to group again. By the third week, I realized I was among strong, courageous, and supportive women. We shared stories, struggles, and the small steps of moving forward. I learned so much from them. Our group facilitator, Barbara Wheeler, had been where we were some 10 years earlier. She truly KNEW how we felt and she seemed to be confident that we could—and in our own time would—go forward. She guided us to have tools in our “cope chest,” and it was inspiring to hear the affirmations of others. Our group became something I looked forward to attending. The women became heroes and role models to me.

I still feel the immense void in my life but I know I can go forward without feeling stuck. I have days with a lot of sadness and longing but I am experiencing more days with happiness and peace. Grief can be lightened when understood and shared. Doing and acknowledging hard things within a group is empowering.

The group I was part of was so helpful and supportive to me. I would highly recommend that anyone experiencing grief find the strength to join a group. Even though a grieving person may feel very lonely, they will learn in a safe and supportive environment that they are not alone.
Meet Our Facilitator

Natalie Peace

My personal grief journey started when I was 36 and lost a very significant person in my life. After that loss, I understood what it was like to hurt from my toes to the tip of my head and feel like my insides were on the outside. This opened the door to helping others through their own grief journey.

Years ago, while employed as a Wingman Advocate for Hill AFB, I was asked to assist a coworker with establishing the suicide survivors grief group in the Layton area. This was deeply connected with our mission of supporting the military and civilian employees on base as well as local community with the continued struggle with suicide loss.

I was studying sociology at Weber State at the time and as soon as my class schedule allowed I took the opportunity to learn the art of facilitation from Kathie Supiano. I was hooked. I was amazed at the growth we would see in the participants over the eight weeks of the class.

Since that time five years ago, I have left my position at Hill AFB to open my own business as a Life and Grief Coach. Grief work ultimately is about finding that new normal and living life without our loved one we have lost. I find in my work that many things that hold us back in life are attached to some sort of loss. I work with Lindquist Mortuary facilitating weekly support groups. I serve on the board of Livastride, a local nonprofit dedicated to suicide awareness with a focus on life skills especially in our youth. I still facilitate three suicide survivors groups a year. I am blessed to be a guide to those walking the most difficult path, a personal grief journey.

The Power of Forgiveness

By Patti Ibholm

I am extremely sad, Mom,
That you had to leave again
But this time is different because
You did so as my best friend

The first time, I was young
And did not understand
I was hurt, confused and
Didn’t know the facts at hand

I held a grudge as time went by,
So angry, sad and resentful
But I faced the facts and felt
That forgiveness was essential

I apologize that it took so long
To let you know that I forgive
I finally freed my resentful heart
From being held captive

The power of forgiveness
Has allowed us to embrace
Serenity, peace, joy and
Togetherness, face to face

The power of forgiveness
Gave me gratitude by seeing
That faith and hope has led us to
Emotional and spiritual well-being

The power of forgiveness
Has exceeded all my expectations
And has given to me, you, Mom,
A relationship beyond my imagination

Thank you for the past four years
Our relationship was beyond measure
The talks, the laughs, and the times we had
Are the times I will always treasure

You will always be in my heart, Mom.
As our relationship will never end
You will always be in my soul, Mom,
As someday we will meet again!
In today’s society, getting what we want now doesn’t seem to be soon enough. We have learned that we can receive a letter almost instantly, but at one time, it took days to get word to a nearby town. In this rush-rush society, we have forgotten that people are human beings and not computers. We cannot expect to get over a loss as quickly as pressing the delete key.

It seems that in the midst of technology explosion, we have begun to expect people to act more like machines than human beings. When the data has been input, we expect it to be over and done with. We understand that sometimes people may encounter a virus (metaphorically speaking) when they are dealing with the first stages of grief. However, we should not expect that person to run the virus scan, find the corrupt file and send it to the recycle bin without feeling the emotions that only time can heal.

Most grievers would say how much they wish the process were that easy, because the feelings that are brought up in the grief process tend to be overwhelming. Many of us would have said that we were going along in our daily lives, and without any preparation, we were thrown into the tornado of grief!

We must take into account that each person is different and people are not wired in the way of computers. Our emotions are raw and very real, and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Because we are all individuals, we cannot expect ourselves to grieve in the same manner as someone else. Also losing the same relationship does not mean our grief process will be the same.

A husband who loses his wife may find himself longing for the companionship that she offered him. He no longer has a hot meal to go home to after work. He doesn’t have someone there to support him in his daily ventures. He misses receiving that phone call at lunch to see how his day is going. He has also lost the mother of his children, the who made sure the kids had healthy lunches for school, corrected homework, cleaned their clothes, kept track of their schedules, drove them to sporting events and the countless other things a mom does. This husband now has to try to find a way to deal with his own loss and emotions, but he still has a family to take care of. He has to try to fill the shoes that his wife once wore, and high-heeled shoes don’t fit a man’s feet very well.

The child of the woman who has passed on is experiencing a gamut of different emotions that may include fear of the other parent dying, or even of themselves dying. They may feel abandoned and wonder who will take care of them now. Who will make sure they have a healthy lunch, clean clothes and get them to baseball practice? Each child will also have individual concerns. If the child is a female, she may wonder who is going to teach her about womanly things in life. How to apply makeup, who she’ll talk to when she’s entering puberty, who will be there to help her get dressed for her first date or be there to hold her when the man of her dreams breaks her heart.

As you can see, the loss of this one human life has not only been devastating to both the husband and daughter in this situation, but their emotions and needs may vary greatly. This is just one reason that we as a society cannot put a time line on the grieving process.
Though grief can be very personal and individual, there are some things that may help a grieving person. I’ve found that more than anything, I just wanted to have some time to talk about my mom. I didn’t want pity that I’d lost my mom at a young age; that just made me withdraw. I needed to talk about her and the memories I had of the fun times and not-so-fun times we had shared. But it seemed that whenever my mom was brought up, the subject was quickly changed. Nobody wanted to see me upset, so I learned to stuff my emotions deep inside, acting strong for others around me. It is a route I would not suggest anyone take. Several years and countless hours of therapy later, I am still trying to dig through those pent-up emotions.

Not only am I still treading through the waters of grief over losing my mom, but the feelings that have been compacted by other losses I’ve had since then.

Seventeen years after losing my mom, it would seem that I should have much more insight and be a pro in the grieving process. However, after losing my father, I found myself again in the ever-changing winds of grief, but this time those winds would take a completely different direction.

During the journey of grief, emotions are on a rollercoaster. It is not uncommon to be having a good day then all of a sudden wind up in tears over some small trigger. For me, live music is a very important part of my daily existence. Many times, when a certain song comes on the radio, it brings on a wave of emotion because it was a song that Dad liked. I have also found myself in certain restaurants that Dad and I visited. When I’m seated near a certain booth or have a certain server, a trigger reminds me that the last time I was in this place with Dad on some specific occasion or shortly before he died. Once again, a seemingly harmless event has triggered another wave of emotion that needs to be felt and dealt with.

If you are with me when this happens, do not look past it as if nothing is going on. When you see my pain, it may be that I need to relive a moment and shed a few tears. Please just offer kind support such as a sympathetic look, a touch on my hand or even a warm embrace. If I choose to tell you about what has triggered my emotional downswing, please do not change the subject to try to get my mind off my feelings, just offer a listening ear. I have lost someone significant in my life and am forever changed because of it. I am learning to live my life without the missing piece, much like an amputee must learn to navigate life without a lost limb.

As a whole, please do not think that people should be “over it” because it has been several months, days or even years. The loss has caused a significant change in their lives, and they will probably never be “over it.”

_Grief Digest: Hope, Information, Support; Oct 2011; Vol. 9 Issue 2._

**OUR MISSION**

The mission of Caring Connections is to provide excellent evidence-based bereavement care to grieving persons in the intermountain west through clinician facilitated support groups, with particular attention to the care of families served by the University of Utah Hospitals and Clinics; and, in keeping with the academic mission of the University and the College of Nursing, to provide opportunity for clinical education in grief and loss to students in the health care professions, and to conduct research which promotes greater understanding of loss, grief and bereavement.

Visit us online at [www.nursing.utah.edu/caring-connections](http://www.nursing.utah.edu/caring-connections)
I’m told the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey has stunningly beautiful mosaics. The amazing thing about these particular mosaics is that Muslim conquerors in 1453 plastered over them. The beauty of those works of art was deeply hidden for over five hundred years. With the birth of the modern nation of Turkey, the Hagia Sophia became a museum, and the plaster was painstakingly removed. Among the many pieces of glass there were pieces of gold and silver, lapis lazuli, and many other precious metals. The main dome is resplendent again with light and beauty. Can you imagine these breathtakingly beautiful mosaics hidden for centuries behind plaster?

Reading about and looking at pictures of the Hagia Sophia got me to wondering if I have plastered over my pain and loss as I respond to a lack of sensitivity by friends and family who avoid talking about my child. It pains me very much to feel dismissed or ignored when I mention Devin. The discomfort of others adds another layer of cover to my pain. We who are grieving have a deep need for acknowledgment that our children lived, mattered, and continue to be loved. As ignorance and the lack of compassion cover my heart, I realize I could become hard and brittle like plaster.

I prefer to see my grief as a mosaic. Each piece has its own unique dimension. My mosaic began with pieces of violet and black. The colors are almost violent in their rage and pain. These colors became merged with that of indigo, purple, and magenta. To me, they represent intensity. Everything about my daughter’s death occurred in intensity: sorrow, hurt, anger, and inconsolability appeared. These pieces along with violet and black collided and enshrouded my grief design. These colorations were followed by blues: royal blue, midnight blue, ultramarine, and peacock encroached on the ferocity of the beginning pieces. Acuteness was still dominant yet a sliver of acceptance emerged.

The next renderings were of dark greens. In our culture, green symbolizes hope and growth, while in some others it is associated with death, sickness, envy, and the devil. These contradictions emerged in my grief mosaic. Hope finally arrived, but the incompatible concession that Devin was not coming back kept my color scheme somber.

Today emergent flashes of emerald, turquoise, maroon, fuchsia and brilliant yellow (Devin’s color) burst in. Is my grief mosaic complete? Will it ever be? Will I be whole and healed one day? In the words of Barbara Jordan, “I live a day at a time. Each day I look for a kernel of excitement… don’t ask me about tomorrow.”

How is it with you? Have you begun to uncover the hard shell of plaster protecting the colors of your soul? Have you allowed the light in? May each of us have the courage to chip away at the hardness and allow beauty in our lives once more.

Grief Digest: Hope, Information, Support; Fall 2012; Vol. 10 Issue 2.
We are proud to support non-profit organizations that support the care of grieving persons in our community.

SEEDS OF REMEMBRANCE

The theme for this year’s Seeds of remembrance Event was *Honoring Those Who Have Gone Before*. This wonderful evening featured Nannette Wride, widow of fallen Utah County Sheriff Sgt. Cory Wride. Nannette shared a story of hope and her loving and generous tribute was followed by “Amazing Grace” performed on the bagpipes by Sande Storm. Attendees were able to remember their own family and friends with long stem roses provide by The Rose Shop.

The 2016 recipient of the Carma Kent *Heart of Caring Award* was spouse loss grief group facilitator Donna Hyde. The Blue Haven Foundation, which supports the families of fallen police officers, was honored with the *Kind Remembrance Award*.

To view the event, go to [https://utah.equella.ecollege.com/items/42712302-4380-4114-96a5-acfa9d97d2fe/2/viewcontent?_sl.t=true](https://utah.equella.ecollege.com/items/42712302-4380-4114-96a5-acfa9d97d2fe/2/viewcontent?_sl.t=true)

DR. ANN HUTTON RECEIVES THE HONORS FOR NURSING DARE TO CARE AWARD

At the Honors for Nursing event May 9, 2016 longtime University of Utah College of Nursing assistant professor Dr. Ann Hutton received the Dare to Care Award, which recognizes one Utah nurse each year who through “volunteerism, advocacy or other community work has gone above and beyond” the routine compassion and dedication already expected of nurses.

Dr. Hutton has facilitated Caring Connections suicide support groups three times per year every year since 1997. She has offered this exceptional care as a volunteer, and has shaped this vital service to those grieving a death by suicide.

“The sheer number of years of Hutton’s care for those struggling with mental illness should be noted,” says Taryn Aiken, a board member with the Utah Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide prevention. “This kind of work takes someone with some grit and willingness and compassion,” Aiken says.


RACE FOR GRIEF

We are pleased to participate in the Memorial Day Race for Grief, coordinated by Lora Erickson (aka the Blond Runner). This race and fun run honors the grief of those who have lost a family member or friend. The Race for Grief is held in Bountiful and supports Caring Connections and The Share Program for Pregnancy Loss.
The Caring Connections Memory Wall is on permanent display at the Annette Poulson Cumming Building in the College of Nursing at 10 South 2000 East on the third floor. The Memory Wall features 4” x 4” handmade tiles with calligraphic names commemorating friends or family members who have died.

This beautiful display is a lovely way to honor the memory of someone dear while supporting the programs of Caring Connections. Proceeds from the sale of the tiles provide scholarships for grief support group participants unable to pay the $50 fee.

We hope that the Memory Wall will be a special place to come and reflect on the person you loved.

REMEMBER YOUR FAMILY & FRIENDS—CARING CONNECTIONS MEMORY WALL ORDER FORM

Memory Wall (Located in entry hallway to Caring Connections) 4” by 4” Tiles: $35.00

Male:
First Name _______________________ Middle Initial _____ Last Name____________________
Birth Year ________ Death Year ________

Female:
First Name _______________________ Middle Initial _____ Last Name____________________
Birth Year ________ Death Year ________

Send checks and information to: Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program
University of Utah College of Nursing
10 South 2000 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84112-5880
"Grief is a journey, often perilous and without clear direction, that must be taken. The experience of grieving cannot be ordered or categorized, hurried or controlled, pushed aside or ignored indefinitely. It is inevitable as breathing, as change, as love. It may be postponed, but it will not be denied."

—Molly Fumia
Grief and the Holidays

“In the Bleak Midwinter... Finding Hope”

With Josh Wright, popular pianist and America’s Got Talent Contestant

Tuesday, November 1, 2016 at 7:00 pm

SAVE THE DATE!

University of Utah
The College of Nursing
Annette Poulson Cumming Building, 2nd Floor
10 South 2000 East in Salt Lake City

Contact Caring Connections at 801-585-9522 or visit www.nursing.utah.edu/caring-connections