

Caring Connections

A hope and comfort in grief program

Volume 15, Issue 2

Winter 2011

Grief Line: (801) 585-9522

A Message from the Director Kathie Supiano



As one year closes and a new one begins, we at *Caring Connections* are mindful that it is not our charge to take your grief away, but instead to support and accompany you in this difficult journey. During these holidays, likely a challenging time, we invite you to consider the

suggestions shared at our recent *Grief and the Holidays* event, which are printed on the back cover of this issue. If you were not able to join us on November 1, a link to video of Paul Cardall's presentation and performance is posted on our website. Please refer to page 10 for the web address.

For many of our readers, the new year is a challenging time of reflection on loss, for others, it may be a time of renewed hope...and perhaps for most, a combination of these experiences. Many people turn the calendar with well-intended New Year's resolutions. While setting goals and making plans is a good idea, resolutions may be too burdensome for grieving people...perhaps even a recipe for disappointment.

Knowing that many grieving people are not aware of the growth and progress they are making, may I instead invite you to read Elaine Stillwell's encouraging article "Am I Making Progress?" If you must make a list, please make a list of affirmations and revisit them from time to time instead of your resolution "to do" list. We invite you to consider joining our upcoming grief support groups and programs scheduled in the months ahead. It is a

privilege to be present in your sorrow, and we hope our efforts inform and support you.

Peace,
Kathie Supiano

"What wound ever did heal but by degrees?"

William Shakespeare

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Grief Group Session Information
- 3 Help for Helpers
Affirmations: Transforming Your Grief
- 4 Book Review

News in Bereavement Research

Meet Our Facilitators
- 5 Meet Our Participants

Meet Our Students
- 6 Am I Making Progress?
By Elaine E. Stillwell, M.A., M.S., Rockville Centre, NY
- 8 Reflections of a Young Widow
By Sue Mione, RN, West Hempstead, NY
- 9 Letter to Carolyn
By Erich Mille
- 10 *Caring Connections* in the Community
- 11 Announcements and Events

Upcoming Grief Groups
WINTER: Eight Weekly Sessions

Salt Lake City

January 19 - March 9, 2011
(Wednesday Evenings)
6:00 - 7:30 p.m. (All groups)

University of Utah College of Nursing
Annette Poulson Cumming Building
10 South 2000 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

This location offers seven types of grief groups, all in the evening:

- Children (7-11) - Adjusting to the death of a loved one
- Adolescents (12-17) - Adjusting to the death of a loved one
- Adjusting to the death of a loved one (adult traditional)
- Adjusting to the death of a spouse or partner
- Adjusting to the death of a loved one to suicide
- Adjusting to the death of a loved one to murder
- Adjusting to the death of a loved one to perinatal loss

Midvale
(South Salt Lake)

January 20 - March 10, 2011
(Thursday Evenings)
6:00 - 7:30 p.m. (Two groups)

UUHC Greenwood Health Center
7495 South State Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84047

Two adult grief groups for those adjusting to the death of a loved one (**traditional**), or adjusting to the death of a loved one to **suicide**.

Orem

January 19 - March 9, 2011
(Wednesday Evenings)
5:30 - 7:00 p.m. (Two groups)

University of Utah Parkway Health Center
145 West University Parkway
Orem, UT 84058

Two adult grief groups for those adjusting to the death of a loved one (**traditional**), or adjusting to the death of a loved one to **suicide**.

Caring Connections
Advisory Board

Kathie Supiano, Director
Shawna Rees, Administrator
Vicki Briggs
Debbie Curtis
Joyce Harris
Jan Harvey
Steven Kehl
Bob Meredith
Erich Mille
Elaine Owens
Carrie Pike
Vicki Pond
Sherry Poulson
Ann Rees
Jody Rogers
Janice Slone
Catherine Toronto
Dinny Trabert
Jacqui Volland

Design/Layout/Production
Katie Schrier

Printing and distribution of the Caring Connections newsletter has been generously funded by Larkin Mortuary.

If you would like to share stories or experiences concerning grief or the grief groups, please mail them to

Caring Connections

University of Utah
College of Nursing
10 South 2000 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

or via email to:
shawna.rees@nurs.utah.edu

Visit our website at
www.nursing.utah.edu/
practice/caringconnections

To register for any class or location, please call: (801) 585-9522. Should there not be enough people registered for a particular group, the group may be postponed. There is a fee of \$50. If this fee is a hardship, please notify *Caring Connections*. Scholarships are available.

Help for Helpers: Helping Someone Who Has Suffered a Loss

Most of the readers of this newsletter are intimately acquainted with loss and grief, and because of their life experiences, may be drawn to or reach out to others who are suffering. Yet, all of us can find ourselves at a loss for words, or uncertain about what to do when we learn of someone who has experienced the death of a loved one. We have learned from our participants how frustrated they feel at the well-intentioned but often thoughtless things people say or do in the time of grief.

Affirmations: Transforming Your Grief

The use of affirmations is more than trying to have positive thoughts. It's important not to use platitudes or clichés here...affirmations need to be truthful to you. Affirmations are statements that reflect your values and goals, and things that are meaningful to you. They can be quotes, scripture verses, supportive and loving comments people have made to you, and even thoughts from the sympathy cards you might have received. Affirmations can also reflect what you are trying to become for yourself or for others. Affirmations are written down, either in a journal, or most typically, on index cards that can be referred to and read during the day. When used effectively, affirmations are statements that positively impact thinking, guide behavior and transform grief in a way that imparts meaning to this life-changing loss. Here are a few thoughts to offer hope for the future:

*“Promise me you’ll always remember:
You’re braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem
and smarter than you think.” - Christopher Robin to Pooh, A. A. Milne*

*“The future is not some place we are going to but
one we are creating. The paths are not to be found,
but made, and the activity of making them changes
both the maker and the destination.”*

- John Schaar

*“Start by doing what is necessary,
then what’s possible, and suddenly
you are doing the impossible.”*

- St. Francis

Chance

Suddenly, she wasn't afraid anymore.
All was calm, quiet.
And she recognized a breath, a presence, an old friend.
Chance!
She turned around and saw the beautiful chestnut face, the blaze, the black mane.
Joyfully, she threw her arms around the big horse's neck.
And the mare spoke to her in the way she always had.
“I've been waiting for you.”
As she had so many times, the girl swung herself onto its back.
No reins, yet the horse moved with her will.
What's happened? Where are we? Am I –
But the questions ceased when she realized they were flying.

Dan Bammes
KUER, host and producer
Morning Edition
In honor of his wife Rhonda

Book Review

It Must Have Been Moonglow: Reflections on the First Years of Widowhood
Phyllis Greene, 2003, Villard Press.

There are many fine books about widowhood available now, but this book by Phyllis Greene, mother of author Bob Greene, stands out in many ways. Mrs. Greene lost her husband of over 55 years in her early 80's. In her recollections, she describes herself as an "ordinary widow" but her straightforward and unassuming style are warmly inviting, and her experiences will resonate with many who have lost a beloved spouse—widows and widowers alike. This book has great value for those interested in exploring practical ideas for working through grief into a new life while achieving an enduring relationship with one's spouse. Adult children wishing to support a bereaved parent will also benefit from the wise counsel in this well-written memoir.

News in Bereavement Research

Humor, laughter, and happiness in the daily lives of recently bereaved spouses.

D. A. Lund, R. Utz, M. S. Caserta, & B. De Vries. *OMEGA*, Vol. 58(2) 87-105, 2008-2009

While recognizing that most people experience both positive and negative emotions during the course of adjustment to widowhood, and that these emotions can fluctuate widely, this study explored the prevalence and nature of positive emotions in spousal bereavement. Using data from 292 newly widowed older adults in the Living after Loss project, the authors found that most of the bereaved spouses rated humor and happiness as being very important in their daily lives and that they were also experiencing these emotions at higher levels than expected. Experiencing humor, laughter, and happiness was strongly associated with favorable bereavement adjustments (lower grief and depression) regardless of the extent to which the bereaved person valued having these positive emotions. The authors were surprised at the high prevalence of positive emotions early in the grief process, and in the context of widowhood as one of the most distressing life experiences, suggest that bereaved spouses who were able to experience positive emotions early in grief were also making more positive bereavement adjustments.

Meet Our Facilitators

Licensed Clinical Social Worker Nancy Lieu is a graduate of the University of Utah and a skilled mental health professional. This *Caring Connections* grief group facilitator completed an internship at Primary Children's Medical Center where she provided individual therapy, family therapy, play therapy, and psychotherapy groups to help support children, adolescents, and their families address a variety of mental health issues.

Currently employed at Highland Ridge Hospital as the day treatment coordinator, Nancy treats adults with various mental health issues including anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse disorder. Through her volunteer service with *Caring Connections* she is applying her knowledge to assisting youth through the grieving process.

"Death and grief spare no one and when children are mourning, their thoughts and emotions are often heightened," Nancy says, noting that during this period, acknowledging and validating children's feelings is paramount. "A grief support group harbors a safe environment and an outlet for many children to embrace their feelings about the loss of their loved one and to share with their peers who are also learning to cope with a loss," she says. "*Caring Connections* provides this service."

Meet Our Participants

When Kathy and Max Musgrove's 32-year-old son Tyler died on Father's Day in June 2010, life as they knew it forever changed. The grieving parents experienced a range of emotions from unshakeable anger to the "what-if" aspects of bargaining before joining a *Caring Connections* grief group in an effort to navigate the grieving process.

Through their facilitator, Kathie Supiano, and through their fellow grief group participants, the Musgroves learned that each and every emotion they were experiencing was not only normal, but in fact was being felt by others. "It was a group of totally different people who came together for the same reason," Kathy says of the experience. "Each week we left saying that we both got something out of it." Max, who is also seeing a therapist to manage his grief says he believes the group format provided by *Caring Connections* complements his individual therapy sessions.

As they continue their journey the Musgroves are finding ways to keep Tyler's memory alive with themselves and with his 6-year-old twin boys. "We talk about Tyler daily and about our feelings," Kathy says. "We have a void in our lives, but the grandkids will hear all about their Dad and he will live through them." She encourages other grievers to seek help in managing the grief process: "Don't go through the grief alone. *Caring Connections* was such a help; the bond we formed with fellow participants is so strong that we are all staying in touch and will continue to support one another."

Meet Our Students

Eunyoung Martineau is a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner (PMHNP) student at the University of Utah and a co-facilitator of *Caring Connections*' grief group for suicide survivors. Eunyoung admits she was initially apprehensive about taking on the co-facilitator role because she realized how difficult the subject might be for people to talk about given the stigma of mental health and the complex nature of suicide. As an individual who has immense empathy for others, she was also acutely aware of the potential to become deeply affected by the sadness and pain that suicide causes families.

Arriving at the first session, Eunyoung met participants who were equally anxious about the experience. Yet even in that first night, the group began forming a strong bond and trust. "The group provided a safe and supportive environment with non-judgment, unconditional acceptance, and support, allowing the members to share their thoughts and feelings," she says. "By the last session the members had become close and had gained each other's trust and decided to exchange phone numbers and email addresses so they could stay in touch."

From talking with participants Eunyoung says she learned some of the early signs of suicide, knowledge she has applied to her clinical practice. By conducting thorough suicide assessments she hopes to be able to provide intervention with clients who are at high risk. In addition to gaining new information to further her clinical care, Eunyoung says she has learned a great deal from participants about emotional healing. "I respect their courage, humility, and strength to keep the memory of their loved alive while going through a healthy and positive grief process."

Our mission: 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.

Am I Making Progress?

Elaine E. Stillwell, M.A., M.S., Rockville Centre, NY

As bereaved persons who are walking the grief journey, we sometimes wonder if we are really moving forward or are we stuck on some issues? Is our pain diminishing a little or is it still excruciating? Are we able to deal with the roller-coaster emotions or are we still hiding under the covers? Do we feel our strength returning or do we continue to feel drained by the exhaustion of grief? Do we enjoy some flickering rays of joy that lighten our burdens or are we still wrapped in the darkness of a heavy heart?

Maybe this is a good time to take inventory to see exactly where we stand in doing the hard work of grief. This might be a good time to evaluate how we are handling our grief. We can memorize the things that are helping us, discard those things that are dragging us down, and list the areas we need to work on to have a meaningful life again.

Annually, each year since my two eldest children, twenty-one-year-old, Denis, and nineteen-year-old, Peggy, died in the same automobile accident, I find it helpful to check how I was doing. It gave me a chance to set some new goals and to appreciate the hurdles I had mastered. We all feel better when we know we have accomplished something. And sometimes that's enough to keep us moving in the right direction. Do yourself a favor and see if you have any areas of the heart that need nurturing by reviewing this basic checklist:

Express yourself

Tell the story of your loved one. Repeating it over and over again makes your heart grasp the loss and helps you feel the magic of saying his or her name, making sure people remember your loved one. Share your stories of your loved one and encourage others to add theirs, letting people know that it is music to your ears to hear that special name. Nobody wants a loved one erased from memory, so keep talking.

Tell the world how you feel; don't spare them by saying, "fine." They need to learn about the roller-coaster ride of grief so they can appreciate the challenges we face and how much we need them to be "loving listeners." Surround yourself with loving people who make no demands and give you permission to grieve for as long as it takes. Share with them the "ups and downs" we deal with each day.

Tell your family and friends what helps and what hurts. They are not mind readers and probably believe some of the myths that are prevalent about grief. We need to educate them, too, every time we discover what helps us and what knocks us down. It takes time for us to discover exactly what we need.

Find yourself

Read those books. This is what helped me the most, learning what others did to survive. Sharing their wisdom gave a jump start to my heart, inspiring me to feel I could survive too. Discussing various passages of helpful books and magazines with my husband and daughter made me feel like we were all in a lifeboat together struggling to survive as we clung to each other. We can invite books in when we want their company and we can close their covers when we don't. They make no demands on us and can offer a ray of hope.

Write down your thoughts

Taking a few minutes a day or each week to jot down our thoughts in a notebook or on our computer describing how we feel gives us a roadmap to understand what gives us hope, what sends us in a downward spiral and what makes us get up in the morning. It's a great tool to unload all those comments and situations that upset or devastate us instead of taking out our frustration on some innocent party or even on ourselves. It is especially powerful when we look back later and see how we have grown in processing our grief, or where we are stuck and need to seek help for certain challenges. Spelling and grammar do not matter since we are the only ones reading it. We can use our own code or shorthand recording our heart's message, which alerts us to feelings that need our attention.

Smell the roses

Sometimes we just need time for ourselves and sacred space to process all our feelings and to find what is meaningful to us as we create our "new normal." In this fast-paced world in which we live, it helps to just put the brakes on and slow down and "be still." Finding a favorite place to reflect, to meditate, to read favorite passages and prayers, to look at pictures or to listen to soothing music, can renew our spirits and nurture our souls. At a time when our world has turned upside down, taking time to "smell the roses" and to get our bearings can be the best medicine for our broken hearts.

My recliner became my "thinking chair" each day as I returned home from work allowing me time to feel my way through the maze of grief. An hour later, when my husband gently inquired, "What time is dinner?" I left my sacred space and came back to reality with a little more serenity in my heart.

Allow yourself time

Allow time for healing. We all grieve differently;

there is no timetable. Men and women are on different grief planets. We need to listen to our hearts, and we don't want to be rushed in our grieving. We need to feel the pain to understand the joy that our loved ones brought to our lives.

We can exhaust ourselves in our efforts to try to find a way to live life to the fullest and make a way for the pain and the full life to coexist. It's like going to a party with a toothache. The real healing is when we accept that the pain is always there, a lifelong longing. Continual trials of what works and what doesn't help us to reconstruct our new lives, but this takes precious time. Grief work is not done overnight. We want to get back on track again. We might have an altered destination, new insights, new traveling companions and new reasons for being on the trip at all. These are the lessons that time teaches us.

Cry

Healthy grieving involves crying, affording us a positive release of all those feelings that accumulate inside of us rather than bundling them up to explode in a negative way later. Cry unashamedly, and teach those around you that it's okay; it's a blessed release, a cleansing of all the tension that builds up inside of us. I tried to keep my tears in check all day at work but the floodgates opened once I was home in my own "safe nest." It was helpful to give myself permission to cry as much as I needed and to have a husband whom I called "my blotter" as he acknowledged my tears with a hug and a loving word.

Pamper yourself

This is a time to take good care of yourself, not out of selfishness but rather out of wisdom. We can't help anyone else if we are falling apart, overtired, angry, frustrated and confused. We have to put our own health needs first before we can help others. Eating healthy, getting enough rest, developing a workable structured day, setting realistic goals for ourselves and finding those things that give us a moment's peace make it possible for us to enjoy a good book, a relaxing movie, a favorite CD, a walk on the beach, a stroll with the dog, a trip to the gym, a bubble bath, a new recipe or going out for dinner with a friend. When we are in "survival mode," we have nothing to give, so let others pamper you, helping you to get back on your feet. Ironically, they need to help us as much as we need their help! So, let the pampering begin!

Treat yourself

Establish a daily routine that works for you. It could be the old routine you used to follow or an entirely different one that helps you meet the new needs of your grieving heart. Going back to work (teaching third grade) three weeks after burying my two children actually was a lifesaver for me. It gave me structure, a busy day and little children who needed me. However, you might need more time, and that's all right. Some people need six months to just get off

the couch or to "move forward" as the uninitiated would say. You do what helps you or what you can afford to do.

Discover activities that give you a moment's peace. Sometimes depending on activities that always gave us enjoyment comes to our rescue. Crocheting, cooking, gardening, fishing, traveling, playing golf, tennis or the piano, watching a baseball or football game can allow us to escape the pain for a few minutes. We are grateful for a few minutes of peace and distraction. We might even discover some new outlets for relaxing as we are grieving.

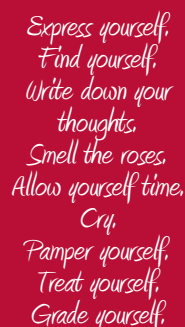
Many of us find running to the gym is a big help. We can yell, scream, kick, jump, punch and bounce. Others turn to nature and walk the beach, hike nature trails, bird watch or plant a garden. Some spend hours making scrapbooks, sewing quilts, collecting angels, writing poems or joining causes.

I collected angels and was consumed with the passion of gifting my relatives and friends with these beautiful creatures inscribed with my children's names and dates so everyone would remember Peggy and Denis as they decorated their Christmas tree each year. Many devote hours to scholarships, foundations, memorial runs, picnics, tournaments or concerts, all dedicated in memory of their loved ones.

It helped my heart a lot to know that the "Peggy and Denis" college scholarship we set up was helping young people realize their dreams, the dreams that my children were not able to complete. So find the niche that speaks to your heart and helps you keep your loved one's name out there in front of the world.

Grade yourself

Am I making progress? Did you discover that you were doing some things really well? Did you find that there were also some areas definitely in need of your immediate attention? Now is the time to pull out all the stops and to get busy helping your heart. Make today count. Face those challenges. Take those baby steps, climb over those grief hurdles and feel the exhilaration of knowing "I am making progress!"



*Express yourself,
Find yourself,
Write down your
thoughts,
Smell the roses,
Allow yourself time,
Cry,
Pamper yourself,
Treat yourself,
Grade yourself.*

Grief Digest January 2007 Volume 4, Issue 3 pages 3-5. Used with permission.

Reflections of a Young Widow

Sue Mione, RN
West Hempstead, NY



I remember dreading when people would ask me, “How are you doing today?” “How are you holding up?” “How are the kids?”

Inside, I would be screaming “How do you think I’m doing? I lost my husband; I am thirty-three years old and suddenly a single parent to seven-month-old and twenty-one-month-old babies. My world is falling apart, nothing makes sense, and I hurt all the time.” But, instead, I would force a smile and say, “I’m fine.”

Why do so many of us do this? Why do we close ourselves off? Maybe it’s because we are afraid to show people how ugly our pain really is. Maybe we do not have the energy to express how we really feel. Maybe, just maybe, we did try to open up to someone and they just didn’t get it, and that made us feel even more alone. Maybe we need to be alone with our pain- to embrace it and wallow in it until it somehow makes sense.

When my husband of only two-and-a-half years died of colon cancer in just five months, my world fell apart. How could this be? Why did this happen? What am I going to do? Friends and family treated me differently. People walked away from me and the kids. Why? Was it that difficult? Was the pain too much to see? I was screaming inside, and no one was listening.

Here is what I was silently saying, “When you see me and my clothes do not match and my hair isn’t brushed, don’t say anything; be grateful that I got dressed. If I am angry or short with you, please don’t take it personally. If you see me smiling one day, don’t assume that I’m “over it.” If I am weepy and crying, don’t try to fix it- just embrace me. If you see that I am overwhelmed and the house is a mess, do not criticize me. If you see that I don’t

have the energy to cook for myself or the kids, please bring me a meal. If you are sincere when you ask me how I am, be prepared for the answer. Don’t be afraid to talk about Mat or let me talk about him. I need to relive this in order to make it real. Don’t tell me how strong I am, because, quite frankly, I feel like I am barely holding on. Don’t be afraid to touch me, love me or hug me, because I so need to feel your love and support. If you look at me and see pain, confusion and distance, please know that I will come through this with your love and acceptance.”

Grief is not pretty, it is not easy, and it is not predictable. It is brutally honest, raw and jagged. What I really needed were fewer questions and more hugs. I needed touching, hugging, even silence. There were days I went without sleep, without food, because the pain was so great, I could barely move- even breathing hurt. I was lucky that Mat left me the most precious gifts: our children, Maria and Vinny. I had no choice but to wake up each morning, put on a smile and try to be normal. The kids wouldn’t notice that I didn’t shower, they

“If you look at me and see pain, confusion and distance, please know that I will come through this with your love and acceptance.”

wouldn’t complain if the house was a mess or my hair wasn’t brushed, that I was falling apart, misplacing things, forgetting things, walking

around in a daze. They loved me no matter what I did. They hugged me, kissed me and told me that they loved me.

Now, almost four years later, I realize that the people who stuck by me during this difficult time, were a lot like my children. They accepted me, no matter what. But I also realize that I should have been more verbal. I needed to educate people about my grief. We should not be afraid to tell people what we need and to be specific, because people don’t know what to do, what to say or how to act. By telling people what we need, we are helping ourselves heal. We don’t need to be afraid. With the love and support of family and true friends we can pull through this, but it’s much harder if we’re alone, so take that first step and reach out.

Grief Digest, January 2006 Volume 3 Issue 3 page 30. Used with permission.

Erich and Carolyn Mille were married 35 years. In June 2008, Carolyn was admitted to the hospital on a Thursday and died a week later. In November Erich attended *Grief and the Holidays* and signed up for a grief support group the following January.

At the third group meeting, participants were asked to complete the sentence: "I cannot / will not move on until / unless..." Erich wrote, "I understand the how/when/why of Carolyn's death." Troy Andersen, the group leader suggested it may be helpful to write a letter to the spouse, explaining the "stuckness." Ten days later, Erich also "wrote an answer" from Carolyn.

Dear Carolyn,

I need your help! I need to understand the why and when of your death. You've been to the ER 5-6 times in the 15 years here in Utah, so when you went in on a Thursday, it just didn't occur to me that you wouldn't leave alive. Starting in the ER, you had no energy, no wanting to answer the doctor's questions. I called pastoral care, hoping perhaps that Cheryl would come in, but a Susan came to visit. She brought God's peace, asking what you or I needed. I right away told her we advised the doctor of the DNR. Susan said she'd follow up. On Monday morning you were too weak to sign yourself, so I signed for you. On Sunday you said you wanted to go home, and I asked "to die?" "No", you seemed to assure me, "I'm not ready for that yet." Yet 4 days later, you announced "I want to die."

I just wasn't ready
I didn't prepare myself.
I didn't see it coming.

But what would I have done in the 7 days before "if I saw death coming"?

Probably anxious to the utmost
Not calm with you
Too upset to have chatted with the staff.

Was it better for me not to be aware of your frame of mind,

your thoughts,
your feelings,
your so diminished conversation,
your so weakened body and spirit?

Maybe, just maybe.

It wouldn't surprise me that you "planned" death this way, so I didn't have to think about losing you, before it happened. Of course, you were doing what you've done all your life: taking care of others, making sure things are easier, not causing undue worry. Yet, you did decide what's best for you! Like any decision, it is the right decision on so many factors, so many levels. You talked and gave your love to the children. You had already told me we were good for each other (and to each other I would add). One son is OK with saying "It is what it is." That's not enough for me. I want more, after 35 years of marriage and almost 40 years.

Dear Erich,

How appropriate! You're at the health services (education) library! You always were drawn to libraries and I see you even have coffee with you. I guess you know why I'm writing and perhaps even what I'm going to "say":

It was time for me to go.
I've struggled long enough.
I've put up a brave front, to protect you and all those I love.
I was just tired. I just wanted to die.

No, I really didn't know what the future after the hospital would have been like. I'm sure that's crossed your mind also. Don't you imagine it wasn't going to be pretty? Probably in a facility, but would it have been agreeable to you? I don't think so. So it was for the best. No time was the right time. Not after 35 years of marriage. And that's why I couldn't discuss this with you. You did listen to your heart and called family. Thank you. And Thursday morning, Brother Boniface said the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be and I smiled for him "...now and at the hour of our death". Then when Susan asked how I was doing: "I want to die", again to her, not to you, next to me. You were so brave, just making sure I got to speak to our sons. "I love you with all my heart." You do realize I didn't say it to you, only because I'm convinced you finally sensed how important you were in my life and you are so right to take that love for yourself.

Good Bye

Caring Connections in the Community

In October, Kathie Supiano spoke at the Remembrance Event for Families that lost a teen in a motor vehicle fatality, sponsored by the Violence and Injury Prevention Program of the Utah Department of Health. This program compiles and publishes *The Teen Memorial* book. In this effort, families who have lost a teen in a motor vehicle accident contribute pictures and biographies of their late children. The project serves two purposes; it is a prevention tool that is used statewide in high school Driver's Ed Classes and other ways in the hopes of reducing motor vehicle deaths, and it is a means of support for families in their grief and remembrance.

Monday, November 1 more than 220 people joined us for *Grief and the Holidays: Our Gift To You*. Generously supported by Larkin Mortuary, the event featured award winning musician, writer and speaker Paul Cardall. Paul has graciously agreed to let us make video of the evening available to you on our web site. We are pleased to share the video of the presentation and piano performance and hope you will make it available to those who were unable to join us: http://nursing.utah.edu/practice/caringconnections/grief_holidays.html

Also in November we completed our pilot suicide support group reaching out to suicide survivors in the civilian workforce at Hill AFB and the surrounding community. This was a particularly gratifying program, and we look forward to providing another group in early 2011. Please help us pass the word in the Ogden/Layton area, and encourage those who might benefit to contact *Caring Connections* at (801) 585-9522.

Caring Connections Office Suite Dedicated to Beth Cole

The opening of the Annette Poulson Cumming Building was a day of great celebration for the College of Nursing. For *Caring Connections*, the day also recognized our program founder, Dr. Beth Cole. The following inscription was placed in our office suite area in her honor:

Beth Cole is a nurse educator, wife, mother of four, and grandmother. To countless Utahns, she is also a provider of hope. In 1997, while serving as a professor at the University of Utah College of Nursing, the nationally known psychiatric nurse and researcher founded *Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program*. Over the years, the program has become a trusted resource for individuals navigating life after the death of a loved one.



Born in Michigan, Dr. Cole received her bachelor of science in nursing degree from the University of Cincinnati in 1965. Two years later she received her master of science degree from Boston University with a focus on child psychiatric nursing. She later moved to Salt Lake City and completed her doctorate at Brigham Young University in family studies. During her time at the U College of Nursing, Dr. Cole chaired the Acute and Chronic Nursing Division and coordinated the nursing doctoral program.

In 2007, Dr. Cole returned to Brigham Young University to serve as dean of its College of Nursing. Today *Caring Connections* continues to assist griever in managing their sorrow and pain through its eight different specialized bereavement support groups each tailored for a specific kind of grief. To honor the founding director's legacy, friends, family and colleagues have established the Beth Vaughn Cole Director's Office in the *Caring Connections* Suite.

Suite Naming Donors: Gerrie Barnett, Ph.D, Bonnie Cole, MD, Boyd N. Cole, MD, John W. Eddy, III, Julie Heywood, Kathleen M. Kaufman, Jane A. Kennedy, Elaine R. Lloyd, Leslie Willden Miles, Gregory C. Vaughan, Rosemary Mix Wixom, Patricia and Merle W. Berry, Joan L. Hadley, Ann P. Hutton, PhD, Ingrid E. Kaufman, Linda J. Mabey, DrNP, Jeff and Shawna Rees, Mark and Katherine P. Supiano, Maeona K. Kramer, Ph.D.; Sherry Poulson-coordinator.

Announcements & Events

SAVE THE DATE: April 13, 2011 *Caring Connections* will be a host site for the Annual *Hospice Foundation of America* educational event: *Spirituality and End-of-Life Care*. The event will be broadcast at the College of Nursing Building, and CE credits will be available. For information, call (801) 585-9522.

Prefer to get immediate updates? If you are not yet on our electronic mailing list and would like to be included, call (801) 585-9522. Help us help the environment *and* lower costs.

Memory Wall tiles honor the memory of your loved one. Our Memory Wall has been updated with two new panels and is now hanging in the Annette Poulson Cumming Building of the College of Nursing on the third floor. This beautiful display is a lovely way to honor the memory of someone dear while supporting the programs of *Caring Connections*. The Memory Wall features 4 x 4 handmade tiles commemorating friends or family members who have died. We hope this will be a special place for many of you who have and will yet purchase tiles to come and reflect on your loved one.



Remember Your Loved Ones—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 _____ M. I. or Maiden Name _____ 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



Caring Connections

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Salt Lake City, Utah
Permit 1529

A Program of the University of Utah College of Nursing

10 South 2000 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84112-5880

Grief Line: (801) 585-9522

Address Services Requested

Suggestions for Managing the Holiday Season:

As every grieving person handles loss in their own way, each one of us observes holidays in our own way in time of bereavement. There simply is no one right way to experience the holidays. Some people find great comfort in being with other people, others prefer solitude to camaraderie. Some find meaning in following cherished traditions, and others avoid them because their associations are now tinged with loss.

Plan ahead for the holidays: The first step in planning is to listen to yourself...what will help you most at this time? You may have strong memories and powerful feelings. Accept this as normal, but prepare for it. Anticipate the pleasures and the stresses of events, and select those you want to participate in. If you expect to be lonely, arrange supportive companionship. If you can't bear the thought of the entire extended family visiting, let the family know of your needs.

Accommodate your plans to your new limits: Most grieving people have significantly lowered physical stamina and emotional reserve. Perhaps you can't get every decoration out this year. Accept these limits as temporary, and good enough for this year. Choose to put your energy into the things that matter most to you.

Accept that the holidays will be different this year: The holidays are often filled with unrealistic expectations that may overwhelm you. You may need to revisit your goals and find a balance between continuity and change. Many people find a special comfort in establishing a new holiday tradition that honors the memory of their loved one.

Recognize that other family members or friends may have struggles, too: Look for opportunities to discuss your feelings and wishes with others who may also be grieving for your loved one. Try to respect their choices, if they are different from yours. You all may need to make compromises.

If the holidays have always been hard for you: Use this transition in your life to try something completely new...an untraditional-tradition. Perhaps you have never taken the occasion to travel or create a new experience on your own. As challenging as loss can be, it can bring momentum to grow and to try something new.

For all of us, whether the holidays are a time of personal significance or not, it can be a season in which we reflect on what we do cherish as we journey through grief.

