As we have discussed in the past few newsletters—healthy grief proceeds on its own—it can be supported, but not hurried. We have discussed the important milestone of being deeply grateful for the loved one now lost, all the while missing that person. Every one of our grief group facilitators is familiar with the question that arises in each group; “How will I know when I am over the hump? When will I see the light at the end of the tunnel?” We know that grief deeply felt is never truly gone—but it can be transformed. The longing for the additional life you would have had together is never fulfilled, but longing softens into warm remembrance. One begins to separate the circumstances of the death from the person who died—and carry those memories apart from the death itself. One accepts that the “whys and what ifs” will never be fully answered and that one must live with mystery. For most people, the light breaks through slowly and inconsistently, like flickers through dark shadow—a good day does not predict that tomorrow will also be a good day—grief is much more mercurial than that. As Jonathan Safran Foer observes in the quote below—“every love is carved from loss.”

Remembering is a vital part of healthy grief and for that reason we invite you to join us at our annual Seeds of Remembrance event, featuring Michelle Schmidt (see back page for details). This annual remembrance event is generously sponsored by Larkin Mortuary. We are committed to offering excellent grief support and invite you to consider our spring grief support groups.

Warm wishes,

Kathie Supiano, PhD, LCSW
Director

“Every widow wakes one morning, perhaps after years of pure and unwavering grieving, to realize she slept a good night’s sleep, and will be able to eat breakfast, and doesn’t hear her husband’s ghost all the time, but only some of the time. Her grief is replaced with a useful sadness. Every parent who loses a child finds a way to laugh again. The timbre begins to fade. The edge dulls. The hurt lessens. Every love is carved from loss. Mine was. Yours is. Your great-great-grandchildren’s will be. But we learn to live in that love.”

—Jonathan Safran Foer, Everything is Illuminated
SALT LAKE CITY

Wednesday, May 8th through Wednesday, June 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, May 9th through Thursday, June 27th
from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm
Weekly meetings on Thursday evenings for 8 weeks
University of Utah Health Greenwood Health Center
7495 South State Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84047

WEBER COUNTY

Adult grief group for those adjusting to the suicide death of someone close.
Monday, March 4th, through Monday, April 22nd
from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm
Pleasant Valley Branch Library Conference Room
5568 Adams Ave
South Ogden, Utah 84405

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.
The Poetry of Grief: Beyond Scientific Portrayal.

We often think of science and art as separate domains, representing divergent worldviews. In this article, world-renowned thanatologist and grief researcher Margaret Stroebe strives to “demonstrate the value of artistic representation for scientific comprehension.” Stroebe’s purpose, to find a poetic voice in the “phenomena and manifestations” of mourning has led her to a wide variety of poets—from Seneca and Shakespeare to Dickinson and Tennyson, to more contemporary poets, Hirsch and Bynner. Stroebe chose the selections with a mixture of scientific rigor and personal awe. The poetry evoked in her, a resonance with a lifetime of attentive listening to the human experience of loss, suffering, and grief.

A BRIEF UPDATE ON RESEARCH UNDERWAY AT CARING CONNECTIONS

We were awarded a very competitive HILLMAN EMERGENT INNOVATION PROGRAM GRANT from the RITA & ALEX HILLMAN FOUNDATION to conduct a feasibility study,

“Complicated Grief Group Therapy for Community-residing Persons with Serious Mental Illness” with community partner Polizzi Clinic.

BOOK REVIEW

REVIEWED BY DEBBIE CURTIS

Something to Hold Onto
Carrie Pike

“What am I going to do with your dad’s clothes”? That question asked by her mother, gave Carrie Pike the idea of making a bear out of her dad’s favorite clothes, to help her grieving family have a tangible memory of their beloved father. From that, “Carrie Bears” was started and has since blessed the lives of so many who have experienced loss of a loved one.

From meeting with families to get articles of clothing, Carrie was let into their world of grief and found she was touched, inspired and strengthened from the many stories she heard.

“For some time, I have felt an urgency to document these stories. This desire stems in part from my friends’ universal need to keep and share memories of their loved ones. All of us want our loved ones to live on, if only in words and teddy bears. I also feel that these stories can benefit more than just the family members of loved one’s past. They are stories of loss, but they are also stories of the triumph that individuals and families achieve in their journeys through grief. We have so much to gain by listening, offering comfort and learning from the lives and actions of those who have lost and those who have been lost.”

Reading “Something to Hold Onto” is a very emotional experience as you read each story and feel the love, the loss and the incredible grief experienced by the grieving family and friends. However, you’re not left with just the sadness of the story but inspired by the lessons learned and shared by those loved ones. You see the resiliency of the human spirit, the many different ways there are to grieve and the ability they have to find hope and happiness in spite of such loss. Reading this book also gives you a heightened awareness of how quickly life can change and makes you resolve to hug more, love more and be grateful for each day.

NEWS IN Bereavement Research

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I am a DNP student at the University of Utah specializing in psychiatric mental health nursing. Caring Connections works with the University of Utah to provide the best care for clients as well as education for students. The opportunity to join and co-facilitate a Caring Connections grief group has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my education, providing insight into one of the most difficult times of an individual’s life and allowing me to gain confidence in my ability to help those struggling with grief in my future practice.

At the beginning of the group, I was extremely hesitant and fearful about my capability to tolerate being exposed to the stories and struggles of the group members. Honestly, I thought that the group would be gloomy and miserable. To my surprise, the experience was enlightening and enjoyable enough that at the end I was upset to say goodbye to all the wonderful participants. We shared tears and pain, but also shared laughs and unconditional support. I learned that those who are grieving have strength that can be used to lift others, which is why I believe these groups are effective. Sometimes it is easier to support others and forget about ourselves when we are in pain, but this group setting allows participants to care for others while receiving care in return from those who understand.

One of the major learning experiences I had during this group was that no matter what stage of grief an individual is currently in, he or she is welcomed with open arms into the group. In the group I attended there were individuals who had been grieving for years and others who had experienced loss as recently as two months prior to the group. Because each member has a different experience with grief, valuable insights and words of support were able to be shared for the betterment of the entire group.

Caring Connections was a significant opportunity in my education and I deeply value the experience and insight I obtained through this group. I am no longer hesitant or fearful of working with those in grief, rather, I am excited to apply what I have been taught into my practice with future clients. While hearing the stories and experiences of those in grief can be difficult, overall growth and healing are the end results.

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/
GRIEF SUPPORT: DEEPLY PAINFUL AND PROFOUNDLY HOPEFUL

Grief is the thing that levels the playing field of life like no other, as I have been reminded over and over again in my personal and professional life. I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and I have been employed at Primary Children's Hospital since 2010. As a social worker on one of the hospital’s medical units, I was privileged to support families while they were experiencing a child’s illness, a new diagnosis of a child’s life-limiting illness, and even a child’s death. Being with parents when their precious child dies and watching them leave the hospital without that child touched me deeply. I wanted to know what happened to them after they walked out of the hospital door for the last time. Where would they find grief support for themselves and their other children? Was that the end of our hospital’s relationship with them? What more could we do, and should we be doing?

Starting in 2015, I began facilitating the hospital’s grief groups as a clinician volunteer. I dove into the work, grew passionate about best practices and evidence-based care for those who are bereaved, and became
After loss, we emphasize the irrational fears and uncertainty with a multitude of “what if” questions.

What if I can’t cope with the gaiety and celebration of holidays and special family events? What if my family and friends aren’t sensitive to my needs? What if the worst happens? What if nothing can replace our traditional celebrations? What if I don’t feel anything at all?

These are common questions that plague the bereaved when family gathering are anticipated after the death of a loved one. Circumstances change in every family, and death is not the only reason for the change. Divorce, marriage, illness, disability, families separated geographically also contribute to the necessity of reevaluating our current circumstances and our family gatherings. Things can’t always continue as expected. When life forces change, we begin to re-think how we can do things differently to maintain the camaraderie we previously had.

The phrase “what if” is about speculation. We don’t know what may or may not happen, but we want desperately to cover ourselves for all the possibilities. And amazingly, someone in the family becomes the person who creatively suggests a new way of doing something. That person becomes the Dream Catcher (someone who created possibilities.) They present the possibility of putting the negative “what ifs” behind and focusing on the positive “what ifs” instead!

Traditions we enjoyed with family and friends have a lot of emotion attached to them. Our brains recorded the sights, sounds and smells; and we anticipate how each holiday will be. We expect each to be a pleasant experience. Society has also taught us that family
counts, gatherings are essential, and during this time of peace and love we can put aside our differences, if only for a little while.

Sometimes, what we really need to focus on as circumstances change and demand our attention, is how to build a new dream or plan that we can live with and still preserve the integrity of the family gathering we once knew. It’s okay to change.

Becoming a Dream Catcher requires taking steps to create a new plan well in advance of the anticipated event. Here’s how to begin.

1. **Develop an idea.** Identify a dream or a tradition you would like to continue, if possible. Or brainstorm about something new that you’ve thought about as a new tradition for family. Perhaps a memory from your past is too enticing to discontinue. Think about how you can re-invent how you do it. Maybe you have always wanted to try something new... like a themed gathering (make it or bake it). Be creative. Get input from family/friends. Develop an idea old or new.

2. **Define the Dream Outcome.** Ask yourself, “What outcome would indicate to me that my new idea was a success?” Success can be measured in this: family had fun. You shared memories. You laughed, cried, or share hugs. You felt close to your loved ones and included people you love. If your day wasn’t as hard as you thought it would be, you’ve created a successful revised or new tradition.

3. **Take a Dream Reality check.** Be realistic. All plans and dreams come with obstacles. Define what might be your obstacles such as your emotions, memories of the past, cooperation of family/ friends, financial resources, travel or time limitations. Knowing what your challenges are before you develop your plan will best help you avoid the objections. Negotiate obstacles before initiating your plant to minimize negative response.

4. **Expect Dream Crushers.** Inevitably, there will be someone with a negative attitude who discounts your attempts. Clue them into you plan initially. Attempt to resolve the nay-sayer objections, but don’t give up because of this obstacle. Sometimes you can be your own dream crusher by giving up when the pain gets personal, when you feel unworthy, or when you make your dream too big of a project. Deal with dream crushers and then move forward for the sake of others who like the idea.

5. **Enlist Dream Builders.** These are the awesome people who are willing to help you achieve your plan. They volunteer and are there to “save the day.” They believe in you and give you confidence.

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**Meet Our Facilitator continued from page 5**

a vocal advocate for improving Primary Children’s bereavement program. “Be careful what you ask for, Leigh Ann,” the universe whispered in my ear. Through a series of extraordinary events, by March of 2017, I accepted the position as the first Pediatric Bereavement Clinical Coordinator ever hired in the Intermountain Healthcare System. Since stepping into this position, I have worked with many other committed individuals at Primary Children’s Hospital to improve our bereavement programming. These developments include re-writing our year-long outreach mailings, writing a Pediatric Grief Group Manual, establishing the hospital’s online bereavement presence, creating and implementing grief and mourning outreach in the Uintah Basin, and securing funding to offer the first, overnight Pediatric Grief Camp in Utah to be offered next summer.

Meeting and speaking with bereaved parents is an honor. Hearing their stories is a privilege. Each winter, I look forward to the time I will spend as a facilitator for a Caring Connections grief group. As a clinician who engages daily with bereaved parents, grandparents and siblings, I recognize the courage of families who are living this experience. Their stories, their insights, their hope are both deeply painful and profoundly hopeful to hear. It’s now my professional and personal calling to be the receiver of those stories and to share in the pain and the hope that unfolds all around me.
Walking through grief is like walking a labyrinth. Those who grieve wind back and forth, in and out, day after day as the labyrinth winds back upon itself and then out again around its edge and back to where the path began.

How long does it take to get to the heart of grief? How many times do we turn and feel as if we are back where we began, or that we have walked through those feelings once before?

And what is it that is in the center? Just where am I on this long circuitous path? So difficult to know.

This labyrinth so often feels like a maze with dead ends that trap me, leaving only one recourse—to go back, to retrace my steps. But there is no turning back as we grieve.

I must draw on my wisdom, that inner voice reminding me that what seems familiar is just an illusion. I must honor the wisdom that tells me that I can keep going, that what appears to be a wall is not a wall or a dead end.

How much pain can one soul handle? What am I to learn from this grief teacher that has invaded my life? Where am I going? Who am I? How broken I am! How lost! How empty! How sad! As I walk this labyrinth of grief.

Mary Friedel-Hunt (Spring 2013) The Labyrinth of Grief, Digest Magazine, 10 (4), Reprinted with permission.
MY CARRIE BEAR

BY VICKI BRIGGS

I received a Carrie Bear from Carrie and some dear friends after I lost my husband to cancer in 2015. One of my husband’s favorite pastimes was riding his bike. My bear is made from my husband’s favorite University of Utah biking jersey. The bear sits on my bed everyday. It is a source of comfort and an emblem of the fond memories I have of my husband. I often awaken with the bear in my arms. I had Carrie make additional bears for my three sons and their families using other biking jerseys my husband regularly wore. I am very grateful for my bear and for the love and detail Carrie put into creating such a keepsake. I am also grateful for Caring Connection and the programs they offer to teach us to grieve in a healthier way.

“I don’t believe that grief passes away. It has its time and place forever. More time is added to it; it becomes a story within a story. But grief and griever alike endure.”

—Wendell Berry, Jayber Crow

How to Become a Dream Catcher continued from page 7

Make them a part of the action that makes it happen. If there are invested in your plan, they will help you make it happen!

6. Make your Dream meaningful. Invite participation from everyone. Make your plan a family activity. Create good intentions. Make something big, smaller. Make something small...bigger! Create a ritual. Make it simple, but not a surprise. Let it unfold either as it is planned or as it evolves. Meaningful is far better than perfect.

7. Commit to your plan. “Turn your can’ts into cans. And your dreams into plans.” If you have to write it down to follow through, do so. But in all ways commit. When the event is over, you will be grateful for the thought and time you put in to making it “better” than expected.

The benefits of becoming a Dream Catcher and building a new dream will continue to help you heal your grief. You will see things differently. Being a Dream Catcher also allows you to share the legacy of your loved one who died. And most important, it can inspire you to live at least one day of a family gathering with purpose—not pity. It is a path of Hope.

Over the years, since the death of our son, Chad, our family gatherings have evolved and changed numerous times due to circumstances such as death of family members, marriages, college, and a smaller number of people attending. I’m not suggesting that the nostalgia for the way things used to be doesn’t creep into my thoughts almost every time, because it does. But, I’ve also realized that life changes are a reality. My cope with that? Every situation has possibilities and most time the changes are welcomed, simpler, and just as satisfying. But that never stops me from having a new Dream!

This article is based on the community program How to Become a Dream Catcher presented by Nan & Gary Zastrow in 2014. Grief Digest Magazine, 12 (4) 4-5. Reprinted with permission.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO CARE FOR CARING CONNECTIONS? HERE ARE WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT US:

If you wish to donate to Caring Connections directly, please contact us at 801-585-9522.

Order a Memory tile for the Caring Connections Memory Wall. Tiles are $35 and inscribed with the name of the person being memorialized. The Memory Wall is displayed in the Caring Connections office area at the University of Utah College of Nursing Annette Poulson Cumming Building.

Remember someone you love this fall with a memory tile.

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 ___________________________ Middle Initial _______ Last Name ___________________________
Birth Year __________ Death Year __________

Ordered by _____________________________ Phone _____________________________
Address ____________________________________________

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 AND THE HOLIDAYS

Grief and the Holidays was held on November at the College of Nursing. Carrie Pike spoke about her experiences with making her Carrie Bears to support grieving people. Hundreds were made after 9/11 and taken back to New York and given to the families of police, firefighters and port authorities. Her new book “Something to Hold on To: A collection of stories from Grief to Hope” was also discussed and reviewed in this issue. Peter Breinholt, guitarist and vocalist provided warm and edifying original songs to enhance the evening. To view this event go to www.nursing.utah.edu/caring-connections.

UPCOMING EVENTS

AGING AMERICA, COPING WITH LOSS, DYING, AND DEATH IN LATER LIFE

On Friday, March 29 from 12:00 to 3:00 pm, Caring Connections will host The Hospice Foundation of America annual teleconference, Aging America, Coping with Loss, Dying, and Death in Later Life. This program will be for clinicians in the area of Grief and Bereavement. Please contact us at 801.585.9522 to register. 2.5 CE credits are available.

FAMILIAL RISK FOR SUICIDE

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Utah chapter presents Familial Risk for Suicide by Sheila E. Crowell on May 2, 2019 at 6:30 pm at the University of Utah College of Nursing Annette Poulson Cumming Building, 10 South 2000 East in Salt Lake City. For questions or to RSVP please contact utah@afsp.org or call Taryn Hiatt at 385.497.1680. For more information on her research go to this link: https://afsp.org/our-work/research/research-grants/familial-risk-suicide-self-injury-testing-theories-multigenerational-pedigrees/

THE RACE FOR GRIEF

The Race for Grief will be held on Monday, May 27, 2019 at the West Bountiful Park at 550 West Pages Lane, West Bountiful, UT 84087. Please see the link below for more information and to register.


QIGONG CLASSES

Qigong: A holistic practice that integrates breath-work with gentle flowing movements to clear stress, cultivate energy, and optimize health. This practice is accessible and can benefit people of all ages, sizes, shapes and abilities. These groups will be offered at the College of Nursing for 4 weeks in July, beginning on July 3 and will be taught by Sarah Elizabeth Levitt, AS, E-RYT, C-IAYT, CQI. Please call 801.585.9522 for more information and to register. There is no cost.
Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program

Seeds of Remembrance
“Grieving the Unthinkable”

With speaker Michelle Schmidt, author of the book
Carried: How One Mother’s Trust in God Helped Her Through the Unthinkable

Music provided by singer and songwriter Cherie Call

TUESDAY, 5/14/19 | 7pm

University of Utah College of Nursing
Annette Poulson Cumming Building
10 South 2000 East, 2nd Floor Auditorium

This Event is Free and Open to the Public

Sponsored by Clark L. Tanner Foundation in memory of Sarah Hogle and Larkin Mortuary

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