As one year closes and a new one begins, we at Caring Connections are mindful that it is not our purpose to take your grief away, but instead to support and accompany you in this difficult journey.

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 “Mood Busters.” 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 are pleased to offer a pre-publication copy of Franklin Cook’s article to be published in TAPS.

We invite you to consider joining our upcoming grief support groups and programs scheduled in the months ahead. The HFA telecast on Managing Conflict will support the efforts of end-of-life professionals and do plan to join us for Seeds of Remembrance in May.

It is a privilege to be present in your sorrow, and we hope our efforts inform and uplift you.

Peace,

Kathie Supiano

“One kind word can warm three winter months.”
—Japanese Proverb
SALT LAKE CITY
Wednesday, May 11th and ends on Wednesday, June 29th 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 12th and ends on Thursday, June 30th 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, May 11th and ends on Wednesday, June 29th 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, June 6th and ends on Monday, August 8th 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.

Should there not be enough people registered for a particular group, the group may be postponed.
In addition to our grief support groups and community education programs, we at Caring Connections actively conduct research in grief and mourning. This is the abstract from one of our recent publications.

Katherine P. Supiano, Troy C. Andersen & Lara Burns Haynes (2015)

Caring for a person with Alzheimer’s disease is challenging and often has negative health and mental health effects that, for 7-20% of caregivers, persist into bereavement in the form of complicated grief. Complicated grief is a state of prolonged and ineffective mourning. An under-recognized phenomenon in dementia care and bereavement is “sudden-on-chronic death.” In these situations, the caregiver is preparing for a gradual dying process from dementia, but the care recipient dies instead from a sudden death. In this study, an application of Complicated Grief Group Therapy for bereaved dementia caregivers with complicated grief is presented, and the effect of therapy with two bereaved caregivers who experienced the sudden death of their spouses who had a diagnosis of dementia is described. The unique treatment elements of complicated grief group therapy facilitated resolution of the ‘trauma-like’ features of bereavement and progression to a healthy grief process.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15524256.2015.1107810

NEWS IN BEREAVEMENT RESEARCH

BOOK REVIEW

REVIEWED BY AMY HENDERSON

“If you were to know that taking a certain path would lead you to a bicultural love story full of adventure in the mountains—but would eventually change into a story of bicultural grief—would you still take it? I would.”

Amber Christensen takes the reader through her unbelievably true story, using the background of trekking through South America to illustrate her tale. In Argentina, she meets Aconcagua. Known to the world as the highest mountain outside of Asia, the reader learns that Aconcagua is many things, the least of which is the setting to three life-altering transitions: Aconcagua brings Amber and Fede together, Aconcagua takes Fede from Amber and, finally, Amber and Fede transform Aconcagua.

Amber’s use of ethereal metaphors and poignant parenthetical asides will take the reader, as it took me, on an unexpected journey through Amber’s deeply personal story of life and death, love and pain, tragedy and transcendence. Amber proves her command of the written (bi-lingual) word, as well as her fierce courage in this intimate portrayal of the highly publicized and preventable death of her husband, Fede. This elegantly told, gut-wrenchingly vulnerable and delicately woven journey across language and culture is relatable to many walks of life—from those who are grieving the loss of a spouse to those who love travel and adventure in the outdoors; from individuals reeling from multiple or accidental deaths to individuals who appreciate that life is an unpredictable path full of love, pain, beauty, tragedy, strength and everything in between. “Así es la vida (Such is life).”
I had the opportunity to be a student co-facilitator in the Complicated Grief Group for Dementia Caregivers. I am a proud psychiatric nurse, currently working with adolescents requiring long term assessment. I have worked primarily in the field of youth and family care, however have had some experience with adults in the acute setting as well as those struggling with substance abuse. I am enrolled in the University of Utah’s psychiatric nurse practitioner program, which is how I became involved with Caring Connections. While I still have much to learn, my ultimate goal is to open my own practice offering psychotherapy and medication management.

Working with ElLois Bailey as the professional facilitator provided a very unique experience for me. She is not only a very skilled therapist, but one of my professors. I was thrilled to have been able to work with her in such a setting. One theme that stood out within the group was how much weight and therapeutic value a calm presence offered. ElLois also taught me the value of the therapeutic use of self, as I observed her ability to connect with each of the group members at various stages of the grief process.

Prior to joining the group, I had the opportunity to sit down with Dr. Kathie Supiano and discuss the various grief related emotions, stages, and misconceptions about grief. The biggest take home I learned about grief is its continuing presence throughout a person’s life. Grief does not go away. However, the goals for a grieving individual involve learning to cope with the grief while maintaining self-care and functioning in daily life. The individuals in this group demonstrated a very important aspect of group therapy: peer support. It was quite lovely and very rewarding to see the members of the group so engaged and caring towards each other. I think that made a huge difference in their progress, for both those on the giving end and the receiving end.

This was such a valuable experience for me, having had a hands-on role with the grief process. I do see it carrying on into my professional work. Grief will always be a part of life, and being able to understand it and process it with clients is a very useful skill to have.

I lost my brother less than a year ago to depression. He was basically my twin soul, just one year apart in age. We shared such an unbreakable bond. The loss I feel every day for him is tremendous. Losing someone you love to suicide or mental illness leaves you asking yourself so many hard questions… Early in my grief, I learned very well how to push the pain down deep inside and avoid it as much as possible. It felt as though just the mere thought of grieving for him was unbearable. I started to feel the overwhelming sadness, anxiety and loneliness that dealing with the grief by myself brought. I soon realized that I had to find a better way to help me get through this.

I saw the information about the Caring Connection support groups on a news board at work and I somehow got the courage to sign up after weeks of contemplation. The first meeting was very hard to get through but I can’t tell you how much hope and courage I found there. To be in a group and have commonality in our stories felt so encouraging and I felt less alone in a difficult situation. The power of community is undeniable, I soon found myself looking forward to each week and hearing from my group. My facilitator, Ann Hutton, was amazing and she was able to help me gain a deeper understanding of mental illness in a way that could help me answer some of those hard questions I had about my brother’s death. It ultimately has helped me move forward in my grief process.

I would absolutely encourage anyone who is suffering a loss to find the courage to join a group. I am so grateful for the experience because it allowed me to share my story and more importantly it gave me an outlet to feel and process through some very difficult emotions along the side of such supportive people.
**MY FIRST INTERACTION WITH CARING CONNECTIONS**

My first interaction with Caring Connections was during my education to become a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner. As a student, I was assigned to co-facilitate the support group for those who had lost a loved one to suicide. This grief support group was by far the most powerful experience during my education.

Currently I work as a Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) in a faculty practice at the University South Jordan Health Center and in a small private clinic in Sandy. I get to teach PMHNP students at the University of Utah and work with great faculty at the College of Nursing. My passion is the integrative and functional “whole person” approach to treating mental health.

Both in my practice and in the Complicated Grief Group, I love seeing the support process work to reduce pain in people with profound grief. I have learned a great deal about grief and have realized there is no substitute for the support that comes from shared experience. This shared experience is the strength of the Caring Connections groups. In the Dementia Caregivers Complicated Grief groups, I see heroes who can finally see through their grief to explore new life roles and accept the loss of their loved one who provided for them the hardest opportunity they ever loved.

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**INTROSPECTION**

By Venis Weaver
May 2000

Savor the essence
That fills the senses
Entering the cavity
And ruminating through the mind.

Focus on the memories
That take you back to innocence,
Remember that only you
Can take in that child in love.

Watch her imagination
Build your castles
And live the reality
That castles still exist.

Dream of tomorrow
And envelop
The destiny of dreams
And know that miracles occur.
I believe the love we feel for a person who has died and the pain of grief we feel are directly and profoundly connected. When people die, our immense love for them is, in a way, the source for our pain.

Understanding the casual connection affirms that the pain following the loss of a loved one is a natural phenomenon. As odd as this may seem, it is true that just as fever is a healthy response to an infection in the body, the pain of grief is a healthy response to the death of a beloved person. Even though, in the midst of your pain, you might feel broken or crazy or hopeless, if you can later reflect on how normal these feelings actually are after the death of a loved one, then you can be reassured that nothing is wrong with you. The thing that is “wrong” is that your loved one died, and the pain you feel as a result of that awful reality is entirely valid.

This realization can empower you to give yourself permission to express your pain: to cry when you are sad, to pound the table when you are angry, to speak of your despair when you are distraught, to declare that you cannot live without your loved one when you yearn for him or her, to withdraw when you cannot be with people, to ask to be comforted when you are overwhelmed. These behaviors may be difficult for you, and they may not be understood or supported by some people you encounter, but they are legitimate ways to mourn the dead—and it is absolutely OK for you to respond to your pain any way that does not harm you or others.

The connection between your love for the person who died and the pain you feel in your grief can also be a window to finding meaning in your loss. In fact, because finding meaning in the wake of a loved one’s death is not purely an intellectual task, the pain of grief can provide the “fuel” for profoundly heartfelt discoveries.

If your pain comes from not being able to physically embrace your loved one, then being close to those you love may become precious to you in a newly profound way. If your pain is sparked by the feeling that your family will never be the same again, then you may be compelled to search deeply into what matters to you about your role in your family. If your pain is tied to an overwhelming sense of being lost without your loved one, then you may come to see who you truly are in a different way than ever before.

These examples of finding meaning might oversimplify a difficult and complicated matter, but the point is that losing a loved one breaks your heart, and grief breaks your heart open. The pain of grief—as dark and terrible as it can be—also can open you up to seeing life in a new light.

Expressing or giving voice to your pain without doing harm to yourself or others—and without short-circuiting your grief—is one of the essential challenges of grieving. It requires that you be supported in finding:

- Safe ways to express natural yet intense emotions instead of “stuffing” them down inside of you;
- Safe places where you are able to “let it all out” in privacy and without interruption; and
- Safe people with whom you can feel what you truly feel and say what you need to say without being misunderstood or judged.

It is important to understand that everyone is different in how they express their emotions, unburden themselves, and say...
what is on their mind. There is nothing wrong with relating to your pain in your own way (for some people are more outwardly expressive while others experience their pain more privately). Just because you are not a talkative person does not mean that you are “stuffing your feelings.” “Letting it all out” for you may happen through your stubbornly completing a strenuous task. And saying what is on your mind may be through you actions instead of in words.

Taking into account your personal approach to grief, these questions might help you deal with your pain: Can you come to view your pain not merely as cruel or senseless or unfair, but also as legitimate (albeit unwelcome and burdensome) outcome of your loss? Can you find ways to step back from your pain that are healthy—and also ways to bear your pain and to cope with your pain instead of fighting against it? Can you allow your pain to lead you instead of fighting against it? Can you allow your pain to lead you to a deep sense of connection with your lost loved one that uncovers meaning beyond the awful tragedy that has occurred? (And can you see ways that you are escaping from your pain or numbing your pain that are unhealthy or that have become an addiction?)

The pain of grief can be terrible, and there is often no sure way to stop pain from unfolding in real time. But finding safe ways to process your pain can help you see beyond it even as it has you in its grip. And reflecting on the connection between your pain and your love for the person who died can help you uncover meaning in your life that comes directly from the relationship you had—and still have—with your loved one.

© 2016 Personal Grief Coaching. All Rights Reserved. Reprinted with permission. Franklin Cook, MA, CPC, blogs at Grief After Suicide (bit.ly/suicidegriefblog) and delivers one-on-one peer support to people bereaved by suicide through his Personal Grief Coaching service (bit.ly/suicidegriefsupport). His complete bio and a contact form are available at bit.ly/biofjcook. Franklin is a survivor of his father’s suicide.

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**Here**

**By Venis Weaver**
**January 14, 2005**

When life seems long
And the trials hard
I envision you
Cheering me on

For the strength of one can often fail,
But knowing
You are right behind
Takes away that fear to fall

Through wooded lands
And mountains tall,
Through rivers deep
And endless sky

All I see my is
Your tear-filled eyes,
And feel
Your lingering embrace

For the finish line
Is close
When I know
You’re here
Mood Busters

BY ELAINE STILLWELL, MA, MS

Is it hard to get out of bed in the morning? Even harder to make it through the day? Where do we get the energy to rebuild our life after our child or loved one has died? What helps us put one foot in front of the other, day after day, trying our hardest to cope and survive? What could give our hearts a boost, especially on a bad day? We can congratulate ourselves making it through anniversaries, birthdays, and the holidays, but what can we do on a regular day when our heart and soul ache for our child while we seem enveloped in a dark cloud and mired in black quicksand sucking the life out of us? What Mood Busters can we call on for relief?

After my 19-year old daughter Peggy died instantly in a freak car accident, my 21-year old son Denis died four days later from the same accident, the day after we buried Peggy. As I planned two separate funerals in one week, I wondered if I would ever get up again, much less smile, laugh or have a life. In those early days, each minute, hour and day was a struggle. Luckily, along the way, I found a few things that comforted me and seemed to shorten the endless hours that challenged my broken heart. Each time I discovered something that eased my pain, I added it to my “Rescue List” so I could repeat it (and also remember it) for the next time I needed to scrape and claw my way out of that dark hole of grief. You, too, can create a list of “Revivers” to navigate you through a rough patch. You might like to try a few of my Mood Busters and then create some of your own.

Treasure that Book. Curling up on a comfy sofa or bed with an inspiring support book while enjoying a cup of coffee or tea or sipping a glass of wine, learning from those who walked before me brought moments of relief and hope to my fragile spirit. Inviting comforting words into my soul and taking time to ponder their motivating message was like handing me a roadmap out of my misery. It felt like an angel pointing the way to better days. Run to the library (155.937 section), your favorite bookstore, or check out centering.org for a motivating book to give you ammunition to fight the gloom and anxiety. Fill your head with positive thoughts, inviting strategies, and inspiring phrases that speak to your heart. You might even want to write down or memorize some words, like those of Viktor Frankl advising us, “Things don’t go wrong and break your heart so you can become bitter and give up. They happen to break you down and build you up so you can be all you were intended to be.” You discover that words have magic and power and can be great Mood Busters.

Write Your Heart Out. No one ever suggested that I keep notes in a journal, recording the ups and downs of my rollercoaster days of grief. But instinctively, I helped my heart by writing about my children and about the things that helped me survive. I guess I was emptying my heart of the pain, pouring it onto paper—and later into my computer. It helped me express what I was feeling, allowing all the suffering to spill out rather than to fill up and later become a disastrous Niagara Falls. Writing helped me discover my pattern of grieving. That enabled me to make decisions and choices knowing what my heart needed as I was creating my “new normal.” Start jotting down a few sentences when you feel the blahs closing in. Discover the power of words as you reveal what makes you tick. Armed with the knowledge of what helps you and what makes you crazy, you can boldly face the enemy and watch those crippling emotions make a fast retreat as Mood Busters take over and come to your aid.

Glue Yourself to Loving People. How wonderful I found it was to be surrounded with loving people who were simply there for me! No demands, no shoulds, no advice, just trying to make sure I was all right. They were like an invincible
fortress around me as I struggled and fought with the gloom of the long, empty days without my two children. Surround yourself with these loving people. They listen to your story (without rolling their eyes), hear your moans and groans, wipe your tears, encourage you to take care of yourself, make no judgments and “walk the walk” with you. We might not be able lean on immediate family members and close relatives since they, too, are battling grief, but good friends could be our anchor. They realize that our heartache and tears are a tribute to what we lost. They acknowledge that the depth of our pain testifies to the depth of our love. Since our grief gives our loss significance, we don’t want anyone to “fix it” or take it away. We just want to wallow in it, savoring every minute as we adjust to the loss of our child. Don’t let anyone hurry you. Make your own timetable. Go at your own pace. Stick with this special circle of loving friends. Welcome their calls or visits, share a cup of tea or friendly beer, designate chores to them that seem overwhelming to you, and bask in their love as they wrap you in hugs—all sure protections against dreary days. They are definite, valuable Mood Busters.

Revive the Spirit. It could be time to break out of your grief shell. Taking a peek at the calendar we can choose a date to do something fun that we enjoyed before our child died. It could be as simple as going to a movie, or rooting for Notre Dame. I walked the ocean beach, put up a Christmas tree, celebrated “Hallmark” occasions—all bringing back precious memories. Remember, a date on the calendar gives meaning to a day and gives us something to look forward to. Or maybe it is the time to schedule a get-away weekend, either to a relaxing resort or to visit that special person we would be thrilled to see. Every chance we got, my husband and I visited our daughter 250 miles away at college, totally enjoying seeing her and delighting in the amenities of a lovely hotel nearby. Just the change of pace, getting out of the house, taking a ride, seeing different scenery, enjoying being with loving company or just eating inviting meals could be a tonic for our aching heart. Plan ahead and keep that gloom at arms’ length by immersing yourself in the joys of yesterday that provide sweet memories and also in the creation of the new joys of today. Discover your own Mood Busters.

Keep Moving. When you’re grieving there’s no such thing as too much physical exercise. Get yourself up and moving, even if it’s just walking around the block. It gets you out of the house, seeing others, noticing nature, and away from sitting all day, popping pills, drinking too many relaxers, or raiding the refrigerator. In those dark days, my daily exercise, rain or shine, was walking my black lab Mickey three times a day. It was like a catharsis for me, walking together as I told him all my secrets and cried my brains out. We could jog and run, roll in snow, and walk in the rain and sub-zero temperatures—all refreshing and exhilarating to the spirit when grieving 24/7. Come to think of it, I think Mickey actually walked me around the block. Today many folks handle exercise a little differently—they run straight to the gym, especially when they’re having a bad day. They’re not ever afraid of those torture machines. They welcome them! They find that working-out doesn’t take away their excruciating grief pain, but it does clear their mind, exhausts their body, provides an outlet for their raw pent-up emotions, enables them to breathe easier and perhaps even get a better night’s sleep. The extra bonus is that they are taking good care of themselves while getting in really good shape to chase gloom away, a real Mood Buster.

Save the Day. Don’t let emotions, comments, situations, people, weather, panic attacks or Hallmark days get you down. Be prepared. Who you gonna call? Mood Busters, of course!!

Grief Digest Magazine
Volume 12, Issue #1
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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
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
We are proud to support non-profit organizations that support the care of grieving persons in our community.

Larkin Mortuary, a long-standing sponsor of Caring Connections, is celebrating 130 years of business in the Salt Lake Valley. According to Spencer Larkin, Vice President, community service and philanthropy are essential elements of the Larkin identity, embodying the “Larkin Cares” philosophy. In addition to providing support of Caring Connections annual “Grief and the Holidays” and “Seeds of Remembrance” events, Spencer Larkin serves on the Board of Catholic Community Services, The Haloti Ngata Foundation, and is Board Chair of Intermountain Homecare and Hospice. According to Larkin, “This is larger than the business value of community engagement. First and foremost, we want to improve the service and care within our community. It aligns with our mission to provide genuine care, and create exceptional service; it is our pledge of integrity and respect in all we do.” We congratulate Larkin Mortuary in 130 years of caring for grieving families.

CARING CONNECTIONS IN THE WORLD (!)

Many of you are acquainted with our staff member Claire Peterson. She moved to Sweden with her daughters and husband Jesse, while Jesse pursues his PhD. In a fun turn of events—Claire crossed paths with Chandra Marin, one of our grief group facilitators. It’s a small world.

SEEDS OF REMEMBRANCE

Tuesday, May 10, 2016 at 7:00 pm at the University of Utah College of Nursing-Annette Poulson Cumming Building. Please save the date!

Times of Remembrance—Remember a Loved One with a tile on the Caring Connections Memory Wall

Purchasing a tile on the Caring Connections Memory Wall is a lovely way to honor a family member who has died while supporting Caring Connections. If you wish to honor the memory of your mother for Mother’s Day (May 8), your father (Father’s Day is June 18) or the memory of a special someone for Memorial Day (May 30), please complete the form on the previous page and mail it to us with your check. Proceeds support the scholarship fund for those who cannot pay the $50 cost of an 8 week grief support group.

LOVE UTAH GIVE UTAH

Caring Connections will again be participating in LOVE UTAH GIVE UTAH, the statewide fundraising day for non-profit service organizations. Love Utah Give Utah is March 31, 2016. If you are not yet on our email list and want to receive our announcements, please call us at 801-585-9522.
Seeds of Remembrance

Tuesday, May 10, 2016 7:00 pm

SAVE THE DATE!

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

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