

# Grace Grief Notes

## Unexpected Gifts

As a Massage Therapist for patients at the end of life, it is my goal to promote comfort and a sense of well-being through gentle touch. According to the American Massage Therapy Association; research shows that massage therapy provides clinical

### Special points of interest:

- Grief and the Holidays
- Book Review: *The Four Things That Matter Most*
- Grace Hospice Open House

benefits to hospice patients, such as decreased pain and improved quality of life. I have been in the field for almost 30 years and I knew how beneficial massage therapy can be. But what I didn't expect when I started my work as a Hospice Massage Therapist, is how much I would get back from those I came to serve. Let me explain...

From the moment I enter their world time slows down, what a gift. No one is in a

hurry or stressed by time. I feel seen in a way that most of us don't experience very often in our harried busy lives. We chat about the weather and other small matters, but it feels like a deeper conversation. Sometimes, I will just sit in silence with a patient, either because they cannot speak or by their choice. And I've learned that so much can be said in total silence. Many of my patients are elderly and have to rely on others to meet their most basic needs. They have shown me what it means to be vulnerable, to need and ask for help, and most often they do it so gracefully. At this stage in life, they have often endured a lot of loss. Everything from the loss of a job title and the loss of their home, to the loss of the ability to walk and sometimes talk. With such courage and strength, they show me how to just be. Spending time with them reminds me what really matters and gives perspective to my life. I witness all the facets of what it is to be human. Sometimes that means sitting with someone who is in pain, angry or afraid.



I've come to see these fragile emotions as beautiful expressions of our human experience, and it is an honor to hold space for what ever arises. And at the end of my visits there is eye contact and a sincere thank you, please come again, and I leave fuller than when I arrived. You see we shared an authentic human connection. And that connection is the greatest gift we can give or receive. This is the gift I receive from my patients every day.

*Julie Monette*  
Grace Hospice Massage  
Therapist

**If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact Jessica Steele at [jgsteele@gracecaring.org](mailto:jgsteele@gracecaring.org).**

## Grief and the Holidays

We often hear people talking about how grief can be more difficult during the holiday season. Prior to experiencing the loss of a loved one, this may be a hard concept to fully grasp. However, following the death of someone we love, we tend to have a better understanding that certain days or times of the year can pose additional challenges. For many, the holidays tend to be one of those times. What about this time of year can make our grief seem more intense or difficult to navigate? This can be caused by a variety of factors that impact each individual in unique ways. The holidays are a time traditionally spent with friends and family, but perhaps for the first time this year you are missing someone special which may cause a shift in your feelings. There will certainly be differences this holiday season because your loved one will not be physically present. For others, the holidays are a time to reflect on the past year, and when you have experienced a death in that time, it can cause an upsurge in feelings of grief. During these months, we may notice that many people around us are experiencing holiday cheer and are in a celebratory mood. When we are working our way through the grief process, all of the happiness on others faces may cause us to have feelings of frustration or sorrow due to not feeling a sense of merriment with the current holiday season.

There are without a doubt additional elements that can make the holidays difficult to face when grieving because each individual has their own journey. These factors can all potentially cause an increase in grief emotions, but what



can be done to better manage these feelings? Here are some ways to cope with your feelings of grief during the holiday season:

- \* **Acknowledge this year will be different**

This holiday season will be unlike previous years because your loved one is no longer with you. Acknowledge that things will seem unusual and allow yourself time to explore these feelings.

- \* **Identify your support system**

Family and friends around you want to help. Whether it is bringing over a meal, being a ear to listen, or a shoulder to cry on, identify these individuals and take them up on their offer to support you.

- \* **Communicate your feelings**

Everyone grieves differently, and with this we often see family members and friends having differing views on how the holidays will be spent after the death of a loved one. Be open and honest about what you want, need, and how much you can take on this season.

- \* **Complete a memorial activity**

This time of year can be a wonderful way to celebrate our loved one who has died. This can be done by lighting a candle in their memory during a holiday meal, giving back to an organization they were passionate about, cooking their favorite holiday food, and many, many more ways.

- \* **Examine your traditions**

Traditions can be kept, and traditions can be discarded. Think about your rituals, and discuss whether this is something you would like to continue to do without your loved one, or if you wish to start new traditions this year.

## Grace Hospice Book Review

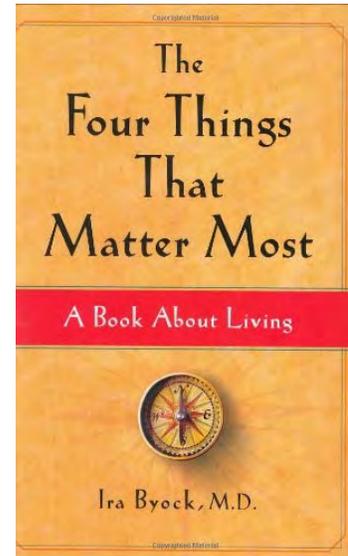
By: Nancy Loyd, Grief Support Supervisor

*The Four Things That Matter Most*  
Copyright 2004 by Ira Byock, M.D.

As we enter this holiday season, we often take time to think of the perfect gifts for our loved ones. Sometimes, though, the perfect gift is not an item but instead a gift of love, forgiveness, and/or reconciliation. In his book *The Four Things That Matter Most*, palliative care physician, Ira Byock writes about four simple phrases that can transform our relationships. They are; "Please forgive me", "I forgive you", "Thank you", and "I love you." Eleven words that truly have the power to change our lives. Through stories of his many years in end of life care, he shares how these simple, though at times difficult, phrases can mend deeply fractured relations or strengthen bonds that already exist. His message is deep and powerful; let's not wait until the end of our lives to share these words with those we love. Byock writes, "You don't need a grave diagnosis or a brush with death to 'come current' in your relationships... Completing our relationships by saying the Four Things to the people who mean the most to us is a way of reaffirming and invigorating what's truly important in our lives." He states, "We are complete in our relationships when we feel reconciled, whole, and

at peace. People say they feel complete when, if they were to die tomorrow, they'd have no regrets—they would feel they had left nothing undone. . . or unsaid." Now that is a gift worth having!

We often think that our loved ones just know these things but we should not assume that our loved ones know how we feel. Dr. Byock shares with us the value of stating the obvious. Words spoken are important and offer the power to heal and/or strengthen our relationships. As Dr. Byock writes, "We live each day just a heartbeat away from eternity" so the invitation becomes for us how to live a life where love, gratitude, and forgiveness are the greatest gifts we offer and receive from those who



matter most to us. May your holiday season be filled with the priceless gifts of these eleven words that Dr. Byock offers to us in this very readable, poignant, and wise book. Word of warning, you may want a tissue handy!

### Open House

November 20th, 2019  
3:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Help us celebrate National Hospice Month with wine and hors d'oeuvres and see our beautiful office space! RSVP's appreciated to [jatonkin@gracecaring.org](mailto:jatonkin@gracecaring.org)

Grace Hospice  
1015 N 4th Ave, Ste. 206  
Minneapolis, MN 55405

*grace*  
**Hospice**  
AugustanaCare & Mount Olivet  
weaving care, peace, grace

## Grace Hospice

Primary Business Address  
1015 N 4th Avenue  
Suite 206  
Minneapolis, MN 55405

Phone: 612-238-0034  
1-855-411-2500  
Fax: (612) 800-5499  
<http://www.gracecaring.org>



## Grace Grief Support Staff

Jessica Steele, MSW, LGSW  
Grief Support Counselor  
612-322-4877  
[jgsteele@gracecaring.org](mailto:jgsteele@gracecaring.org)

Nancy Loyd, MA  
Grief Support Supervisor  
612-910-3342  
[nbloyd@gracecaring.org](mailto:nbloyd@gracecaring.org)

*The mission of Grace Hospice is to serve God by recognizing that every person deserves to live out his or her life with respect and dignity, free of pain, and in an environment that promotes quality of life.*

## Interested in Volunteering?

As you may be aware, we offer volunteer services to our patients and their families. Most of our volunteers come to us because they know first-hand about the comfort and support these volunteers provide to others. If you or someone you know would like an opportunity to give back to the hospice program, we encourage you to consider volunteering for Grace Hospice.

Our volunteers can visit patients and families, offer short respite for families needing to attend appointments, bake cookies or special treats, make phone calls, read mail or books

to those who can no longer make out the fine print, watch movies, play games,



or simply be a comforting presence. We invite you to consider putting your talents to use by helping those that need a little extra support.

Please feel free to contact Sarah Matthews, the volunteer coordinator for Grace Hospice, if you are interested in becoming a hospice volunteer, or learning more about our Hospice Volunteer Program. You can reach Sarah by phone at 612-843-6816 or by email at [smmatthews@gracecaring.org](mailto:smmatthews@gracecaring.org).