

# Grace Grief Notes

## A Word from Sarah Van Winkle

If you have experienced the loss of a loved one, you know that the emotions we experience in grief are complicated. When I lost my dad a few years ago, I knew the pain of losing him would affect me for a lifetime. I also realized the

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beautiful memories of his unconditional love for me would soften the pain and help me to continue to live life in a way that would

make him proud. Ultimately,

in grief, I learned how blessed I was in having had such a wonderful dad to know and to love with my whole heart, yet when it was his time to go to God, I also knew I had to let him go. There is a poem from the late Mary Oliver that speaks to me which I would like to share with you:

*"In Blackwater Woods"*

*To live in this world  
you must be able  
to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it  
against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes  
to let it go,  
to let it go.*

It has been such a privilege for me to lead the extraordinary group of people who work for Grace Hospice serving our patients and families in the community. We are a faith based non-profit hospice always trusting in God to hold us and strengthen us in times of grief.

Sarah Van Winkle  
Executive Director



GRACE HOSPICE MUSIC THERAPY TEAM

## A Note from Mary Lord, Music Therapist

"Music can be a powerful tool to help us process feelings of grief when experiencing the death of a loved one. Connecting with our emotions is an important part of helping us move through painful times, and eventually finding a way to co-exist with loss. Because music activates the deep structures of the brain associated with mood, memory and emotion, music therapy can create a safe space to reflect on our situation, express ourselves and create opportunities to remember our loved one. Music therapy can also provide a way to give tribute to our loved one who we've lost. This could be done through songwriting, creating a legacy project or simply making a playlist of songs that remind us of our loved one. None of this is meant to be a distraction from our grief, but instead a way to be present with the emotion, an imperative step in the process of letting go."

## Mother's Day Without Mom

Mother's Day has recently come and gone, and for many this time of year can bring up an abundance of different emotions. We hear people talking about their brunch plans with mom around this day, we enter stores and see an assortment of cards, we can't turn on the television without a commercial playing that speaks the words "mom," "mother", or "celebrate." For those of us who have lost our mothers, the idea of Mother's Day and celebration do not always feel like they should go hand-in-hand. This season instead may bring up feelings of anxiety, sadness, and hurt. The anticipation of the first Mother's Day after your mom's death can be excruciating. The uncertainty of the emotions that will surface on that day, the anxiety related to whether or not people are going to bring up your mom's death, and perhaps the first time in your life that this day has not been spent with your mother. Maybe you had a tradition for this special day every year, or maybe it's the painful feeling that you weren't able to pick up the phone and give mom a call this time. These feelings are all normal and valid when experiencing the death of our mothers, and no matter what age we are, it is never easy to lose our moms. Our mothers loved us from the moment they met us, and that is a bond that is unlike any other.

I urge you during this season to allow for those moments of sadness, because we are grieving a hole in our lives that can never



be completely filled by another individual. Tears are not a sign of weakness, but instead a symbol of our love for something we once

physically had and now is gone. While our mothers are no longer tangibly here with us, we will continue to carry them with us for the rest of our lives. The values they instilled in us, their weird quirks that we were disappointed as teens to discover we too possess, and their love and memories that we continue to hold in our hearts. Those things can never be taken away from us, not even by something as significant as death.

*“Mother, you left us beautiful memories, your love is still our guide, although we cannot see you, you're always at our side.”*

*-Anonymous*

And with those periods of tears brought on by sadness, I also encourage you to embrace the tears induced by laughter. Remember the special times spent together, the inside jokes, your mom's best home cooked meal. Allow space for smiles and enjoyment with your loved ones and reminisce about your most cherished moments. The term “celebration” may not initially seem fitting for the season, but upon further reflection, we begin to realize that perhaps it is a time to commemorate and praise the incredible woman that we were lucky enough to get to call “mom.” From our first breath to our last, our mother's love embodies us, and I think that is one of the most beautiful things of all.

## Grace Hospice Book Review

By: Nancy Loyd, Grief Support Supervisor

*After The Loss of Your Mother: A Grief & Comfort Manual*

Copyright 2018 by Elaine Mallon

I wish I would have had Elaine Mallon's book *Healing After The Loss of Your Mother: A Grief & Comfort Manual* to help guide me through the difficult time of my own mother's death. This book is a wonderful guide and resource for both the griever and those that want to support the person grieving.

The death of your mother brings on a grief like no other, even when it is expected. This book is like a compassionate friend who has been there and knows just what you are feeling and the comfort you are seeking on each step of the grief journey. She writes with empathy and knowledge about grief and the winding path that grief takes you on as you move through the many emotions, thoughts, and questions that arise

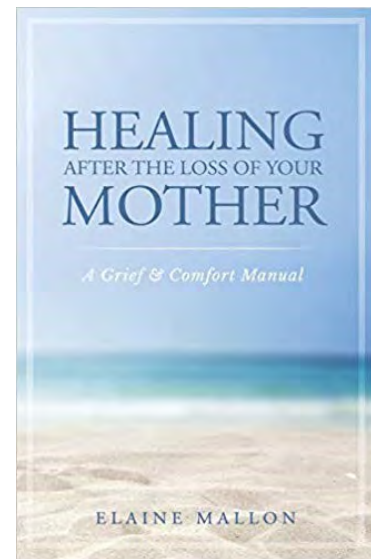
during the process.

In the first section of the book, Mallon is writing to the person grieving. She writes in a very accessible and easy style with short chapters, which is exactly what a person needs when they are fresh in their grief and find it hard to focus on reading (or anything else for that matter). She lays out straightforward ideas regarding coping tools and strategies and what can be expected at milestone dates and events. Throughout the book, she encourages the griever to be gentle and kind with oneself even if they aren't receiving that message from the world around them.

In the second section of the book, she is writing to those who are supporting the grieving person. She is able to express exactly how to best comfort and companion a friend or relative who is grieving. Again, her straightforward and compassionate words will

no doubt bring much comfort to both the grieving person and those who want to support them in a loving and helpful way.

I highly encourage this book for one grieving the death of their mother, or for one who wants to comfort someone grieving one of the most significant deaths a person experiences in their lifetime.



### Join Us for Our Legacy of Grace Gala

Our second annual Legacy of Grace Gala will be held on Thursday, June 20th. Funds raised at the gala will allow Grace Hospice to emotionally and spiritually support patients and their loved ones in this sacred time of life's transitions. For more information or for tickets, please visit our Legacy of Grace event website at

<https://one.bidpal.net/legacyofgrace19>.

## Grace Hospice

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*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).