

Grace Grief Notes

Welcome!

Welcome to our first edition of Grace Grief Notes! Having a grief newsletter is something that has been on my wish list for quite awhile, and now with the addition of Jessica Steele, MSW to our Grief Support Team, it has

Special points of interest:

- Grief and the Holidays
- Book Review: *Holding Space*
- Volunteering Opportunities

finally become a reality. We hope to provide in these quarterly newsletters helpful articles about various dimensions of grief and/or season appropriate grief information, a book review of a grief related book, and an article written by one of the team members at Grace Hospice along with other tidbits about what is happening at Grace.

We have been so honored at Grace Hospice to have been

able to care for your loved ones and we hold each of them and all of the families/ caregivers in loving prayer and caring thoughts. As a staff we hold monthly memorial services to remember by name each patient who has died over that

past month. We read aloud each name and drop a beautiful stone into a glass bowl as a reminder of each individual we have been blessed by as we have cared for them. Music, prayer and storytelling are always a part of each service as well.

Jessica and I are grateful to be able to extend the care of Grace Hospice for thirteen months after the death to family and friends. We are pleased to offer this newsletter in addition to our mailings, phone calls, and counseling we already provide.

This newsletter will be available in electronic format as well, so please let us know if



you would prefer to receive it via email. Also please know that you may opt out of our mailings at any time simply by contacting us. We thank you for trusting us with the care of your loved one and we look forward to offering many future editions of Grace Grief Notes!

Nancy Loyd, MA
Grief Support Supervisor

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please contact Jessica Steele at jgsteele@gracecaring.org.

Grief and the Holidays

Of all times of the year, the holidays tend to creep up on us quickly and can cause both stress and excitement. When grieving the loss of a loved one, the holidays oftentimes bring with them an assortment of additional emotions. Sometimes individuals wish they could skip over this time of year due to feel-

“There is no way around the pain that you naturally feel when someone you love dies. You can’t go over it, under it, or around it...Going through it is what will help you heal.”

-Therese Rando

ings of sadness associated with going through this time of year without their loved one who has died. Others may be having feelings of anxiety or be dreading the fact that the holidays may have a different feel this year without their special person being by their side. As holiday celebrations begin and family comes together, it is natural to be feeling

the absence of your loved one more so than usual. If and when these feelings arise, I encourage you to take a moment and consider these three words. *Rest. Breathe. Remember.*

Rest

- * Only take on what you can handle this holiday season. Plan events ahead of time, and don’t allow yourself to feel pressured into attending events that you’re not comfortable with.
- * Make sure to get plenty of sleep at night and relax when needed.
- * Allow yourself this year to have fewer holiday expectations. It is okay to put up fewer decorations, do less shopping, and attend fewer events, especially in the first holiday season without your loved one.

Breathe

- * Acknowledge and accept the feelings you are having, both positive and negative. Embrace them by giving yourself opportunities to laugh and cry, and everything in between.
- * Be honest with friends and family about this season and why you may be having some difficulty.
- * Create a routine of deep breathing. If you are feeling anxious or overwhelmed, give yourself the time and space to take some deep breaths.
- * Ask for and accept the loving support of friends and family.

Remember

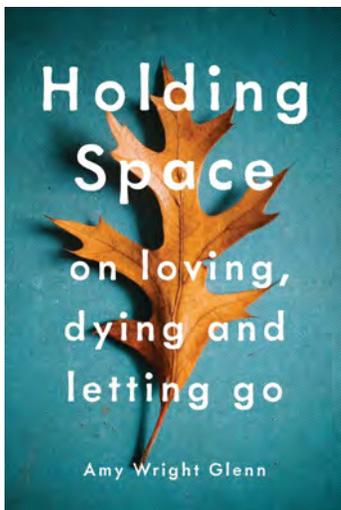
- * Share your favorite memories and stories about your loved one who has died with friends and family.
- * Light a candle in remembrance during a holiday celebration.
- * Make a donation or volunteer with an organization that was of importance to your loved one.
- * If you are a member of a faith community, ask for prayers for your family and your loved one who has passed on.
- * Enjoy your loved one’s favorite holiday foods or drinks, and prepare dishes with family members.



Grace Hospice Book Review

By: Jessica Steele, MSW, LGSW
Holding Space on Loving, Dying, and Letting Go
 Copyright 2017 by Amy Wright Glenn

In *Holding Space on Loving, Dying, and Letting Go*, Amy Wright Glenn shares personal narratives, research, and philosophy related to death, dying and the approach American culture takes when discussing these commonly avoided topics. As a hospital chaplain and doula, she has witnessed the happiest and saddest of times throughout her work. She shares her journey through spirituality and mindfulness while holding space for the things that matter most. Glenn begins her story by sharing of her upbringing in a Mormon family in Utah, detailing her par-



ents' divorce, and her mother's battle with mental illness. As her childhood progressed she began to challenge her family's faith, and had a desire to learn more about other religions and spirituality around the world. Through her education and travels she developed the want to be pre-

sent and mindful - to hold space for the important moments. She encapsulates this behavior by holding space when she is serving as a doula with a mother who is about to give birth, or working as a hospital chaplain with a family awaiting critical news in the emergency room.

She speaks to the power of prayer, the difficulty of death, and the importance of teaching our children about the end-stage of life. Emphasis is put on the significance of not hiding death from children, but instead describing it in terms that are age appropriate. She chronicles stories of explaining death to her four-year-old son ranging from the death of his fish, to his grandfather's election of hospice care.

She has a unique way of incorporating viewpoints and philosophy from different religions and denominations including Catholicism, Mormonism, Buddhism and many more. Terms are utilized throughout the novel that are found in certain cultures and religions such as the term "hungry ghosts" commonly seen in Buddhism. Metaphorically, hungry ghosts are

those who are never satisfied and are endlessly yearning for fulfillment. She incorporates this concept into how individuals live their lives without ever being fully present.

"[Glenn] speaks to the power of prayer, the difficulty of death, and the importance of teaching our children about the end-stage of life."

Glenn asks the readers to have a compassionate presence in everything they do, but especially

when being around death. Her mindful expressions and courage described throughout her stories help us to see and understand that death is unavoidable. Beginning the process of increasing dialogue around dying assists us all in accepting our own eventual mortality.

Glenn gracefully states, "Dying while living is inevitable. Dying itself is inevitable. Whether our experience with death is a release or a shattering depends on how we hold space - not only for our fears, but also for our inner shadows, secret longings, and hungry ghosts." (Glenn, 2017, p. 86).

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.