

LIFT

Grief is a process, not a state. –Anne Grant

February 2021
Bereavement Newsletter

Living Is For Today
West Texas Rehab's Hospice of San Angelo

VIRTUAL GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Thursday, February 25, 2021, 1:00 pm , via Google Meets
Contact Karen at (325) 658-6524 or kschmeltekopf@wtrc.com
for more information.

BUILDING BRIDGES VIRTUAL SPRING 2021 SESSION

Grief Support program for children and teens, grades K-12,
who have experienced the death of a loved one.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, groups will be offered virtually
via Zoom video conferencing.

Tuesday evenings, February 2 - March 9, 2021

No cost to participate. Please contact Melissa Salvato at (325) 658-6524 or
msalvato@wtrc.com for more information or to register.



Editor's Note

When compiling the LIFT, I tend to opt for articles written by clinicians and posted on professional websites rather than personal essays or blogs. But during the last tumultuous year, I have come across many well-written, instructive essays revealing how everyday people have experienced loss in their lives and how they are coping with it – mainly by *doing* something. You may see yourself in these writings. I do. I only wish I could express myself as well.

“Butter, Sugar, and a Tablespoon of Grief”

By Jenn Shapland (*New York Times*, December 25, 2020)

The thing about grief, big and small, is that it's ordinary. We carry our losses in our bodies, they say, deep in the tissues of our hips, our shoulders, and each new loss we experience calls up all our previous losses. We can dissolve some of this grief by moving, working it out, stretching it out, talking it out, crying it out, but can't we also roll it out on a lightly floured countertop, shape it with our hands into something small and delicate and crisp?

All these cookies and cards and gifts are also ways we hand off our pain and our loss at the darkest time of year, bake it into something to pass to others, share it when it becomes too much to carry. My mom's cookies are the way she remembers her mother, the only real grieving she seems to allow herself once a year, music blaring, oven beeping, singing “How'd you like to spend Christmas on Christmas Island?”

It is her chance to remember, a performance mimicking her mom's acting out her sorrow, dusting it with powdered sugar, dotting it with jam.

Like Penelope, weaving and unweaving night and day for her husband lost at sea, the only way I know to get through the year is to keep my hands moving. I'm not trying to busy it away, or ignore it, but to let myself feel it. The doing is where the feeling can happen.

“A Reminder to Enfold Yourself in Small Comforts”

By Margaret Renkl (*New York Times*, August 24, 2020)

In June, after 25 years in this house, my husband set to work on our 70-year-old kitchen cabinets, chiseling out layers of paint, planning and sanding warped edges. When he was finished, the cabinet doors would close all the way, and stay closed, for the first time in decades. If you ask him why he went to all this trouble, he has no explanation beyond the obvious: For 25 years it needed to be done, and so he finally did it.

But I think it's more than that. I think he was worrying about his lonesome father, quarantined in an efficiency apartment, and that's why he fixed those cupboard doors. He

was worrying about our eldest son's pandemic wedding and our middle son's new job as an essential worker. He was worrying about whether our youngest son's university would make the inevitable decision to hold classes online before we had to sign a yearlong leave for an apartment our son might never set foot in. My husband can't control any of those things, much less cure Covid-19, but he can make the kitchen cabinets stop flying open and knocking us in the head while we cook.

"The Big Impact of a Small Hobby"
By John Donohue (*New York Times*, May 1, 2020)

I found that drawing even the most mundane things like a pair of shoes helped me relax. If it looked like we were going to be late for a doctor's appointment or a soccer game, for example, I was less likely to get frustrated if I took a moment to capture the curving metal of the radiator in the living room or the backpack that was sitting in the hall. While I waited for everyone to get ready, time seemed to expand and slow. There was quiet in the house, and in my soul.

I liked to cook and was comfortable spending time in the kitchen, so I started drawing my dish rack every night. I now have more than a thousand renditions of my dish rack. Sometimes, especially during the lockdown, depending on how stressful things are, I draw it two or three times a day. These days, if I'm irritable at home and getting on my wife's nerves, she'll say to me, "Do you want to go do some drawing?" or "Have you done your dish rack yet, dear?"

By the time I'm done with a sketch, it is as if I'm a new man. This is partly because drawing has taught me to make the most of my mistakes. I work in ink, from life. It is oddly liberating, as I have learned to forgive myself. I draw not for the result but for the process, and fortunately I've been doing it long enough that the results are pleasing. I love capturing the three-dimensional image on the two-dimensional page. If Wordsworth's heart leapt up when he beheld a rainbow in the sky, mine jumps when I convincingly foreshorten the handle of a frying pan, and it rises off the page.

The Joy of Paper Flowers
By Margaret Renkl (*The New York Times*, April 20, 2020)

I feel very lucky to have a small yard to putt in during this lengthy quarantine, and I am spending as much time out there as I can. But state parks in Tennessee are closed now, and the city greenways and urban parks, though open, are often too crowded now for safe passage during a time of social distancing. So I am missing spring in the woods this year, something I have never done before in my life, and I find myself returning to my mother's flower books for solace. One book leads to another, and memories lead to dreams just as flowers lead to caterpillars in the real world. With a field guide in my hands for an evening, I'm not in the middle of a pandemic anymore. Without ever stepping out of the house, I'm in the middle of life itself.

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Hospice of San Angelo, Inc.
P.O. Box 471
San Angelo, Texas 76902

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