

# Bereavement Services

## Creation and Creativity

**“Whatever the wounds that have to heal, the moment of creation assures us that all is well, that one is still in tune with the universe, that the inner chaos can be proved and distilled into order and beauty.”**

**– May Sarton**

I once knew a grieving woman who developed an interesting hobby. She would find old glass plates from thrift stores, and whenever she was feeling particularly sad or angry, she would break them. Later on, after the intensity of her feelings subsided, she would pick up the pieces and glue them back together in new and interesting patterns.

This woman was certainly not a professional artist, but her plate hobby provided therapeutic comfort. By breaking the plates, she was able to release some of the pent up feelings inside her. She acknowledged the depth of her emotion and gave it space. However, she did not want to simply leave the plates broken. After time had passed, she would create something new from the pieces. Her new creation was different from the original plate, but it still had all the original parts.



Engaging in creative activities can be helpful when we grieve. Creating something is a symbol that something new and beautiful can come from brokenness. Grief can break our hearts, and the loss of our loved one's physical presence changes us forever. There is no question that we are different as a result of both knowing our loved ones and losing them. This does not mean, however, that we are destined to be shattered individuals; we can continue to grow and create new aspects of our lives that are beautiful.

Using creativity can take a variety of forms, even if we do not consider ourselves to be creative. We can paint a room in our house as a way of using our creativity. We can cook a new dish for dinner. We can write poetry, take pictures or spray paint used furniture. I once knew a woman who went with friends to a canvas night at a “do-it-yourself art studio” as a means of exercising her creativity. There are a variety of opportunities for us to express our grief and illuminate different sides of ourselves that we may not have expressed before.

Creating something new is therapeutic because it allows us to express our feelings in tangible, physical ways. It allows us to escape our heads and the intense feelings that are pervading our worlds. And it is symbolic of the fact that we have experienced rawness in our grief, but that we can continue to live and create in the midst of it.

### Activity Suggestions

Almost any activity can use creativity! Here are some ideas:

- Write a story, poem or song.
- Paint something in your home, like furniture or a wall.
- Sew a quilt or knit a scarf.
- Attempt to fix an appliance that is broken.
- Spend time working on your vehicles.
- Attend a community art class

## The death of a loved one has a significant impact on our lives.

We cannot avoid experiencing the intense grief that we feel, but we can learn how to live with the changes that occur as a result of the loss.

UnityPoint Hospice Bereavement Services walks alongside you as you experience loss following the death of a loved one. Grief is not about getting over a loss; it is about the process of adjusting to the significant changes from the loss. We provide space for you to talk about your loved one and how his/her death impacts numerous aspects of your life.



UnityPoint Hospice

# Investing in Community

**“The power of community to create health is far greater than any physician, clinic or hospital.”**

**– Mark Hyman**

When someone we love dies, we experience many layers of loss. For example, we may lose our dreams, security and companionship after our loved one’s death. These layers of loss leave significant holes in our lives that leave us feeling empty inside.

It definitely takes time to process all of these layers of loss; we need time to reflect upon the impact these losses have had on our lives. Nevertheless, after we have spent time reflecting upon our losses, it is beneficial to think about ways you can continue to find connection and meaning in your life. One of the best ways to do this is to invest in your community. Considering volunteering at a local nonprofit, joining a nearby gym or participating in an organization focused on a particular topic (such as a reading club, knitting circle or cooking group). You could also take a community education class or participate in a local church’s activities.

There are numerous benefits with investing in your community. You may find new friends and relationships. You can deepen your sense of meaning and purpose because you are contributing to societal growth. You could experience greater self-esteem by trying something different and realizing new abilities.

These new activities and groups are *not* meant to replace your loved one. Rather, they can actually be ways of *honoring* your loved one. Perhaps you and your loved one both loved animals, so you volunteer at the local Animal Rescue League. Additionally, our loved ones would likely want us to experience connection and meaning; they would appreciate our desire to contribute to our well-being, as well as our community’s prosperity.

It may take time to find a group or an activity that is a good fit. Keep trying different ones until you find one that feels right!



## Activity Suggestions

- Think about what hobbies you enjoy. Most hobbies have some group or organization that you can join.
- It may feel intimidating to try a new activity or group for the first time. Ask a trusted friend or relative to come with you, or talk to the group organizer before so you have a better understanding of what to expect.
- Just try it! Go to one class, meeting or workout. If you do not like it, give yourself permission to leave.
- If you would like assistance finding a community activity/group, please contact your bereavement coordinator.

## One-on-One Meetings

Meet individually with your bereavement coordinator to share the story of your loved one and how your loss has impacted you. The location can be your house, our office, or at a neutral location such as a coffee shop.

## Support Groups

UnityPoint Hospice offers a number of different supports groups that address people’s unique loss and grieving style. A complete listing of our groups is provided on the enclosed flyer. For more information, please contact one of the bereavement coordinators listed below.

**Anne Alesch, Bereavement Coordinator**

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