

# Bereavement Services

## Hope

**“Each loss brings growth with it, and learning to handle new experiences and taking charge of your needs is part of the transformative process.”**

**– Elizabeth Berrien**

I can still remember the first moment I felt hope after experiencing a significant loss. Several months had passed in the darkness of grief; I had not felt even a flicker of hope during this time. One day I was out walking, and I saw a dandelion beside the trail. I felt a sudden swell of hope as I looked at the dandelion: hope that there was meaning to life and that good things would happen again. I hadn't felt hope for so long that the feeling was foreign to my grief-stricken self. It seems incredulous that a dandelion – technically a weed – produced these feelings after months of sadness, but I think I was finally ready to feel hope again, and a small weed was all that was needed for that first push.

It can be difficult to feel hope when we are grieving intensely. We lose so many dreams and feelings of security that it can be tough to articulate what we even *want* in our future. Some people express that this is one of the most difficult parts of the grief journey. After the initial shock of a loved one's death subsides, they start to realize what it is like to live without their loved one, and they have no idea what direction to go. They have no idea what to want or pursue because so many of those things had previously been tied to life with their loved one.

After losing someone so significant, hope often enters our life again in small doses. Maybe it's a hopeful feeling after seeing a flower on a walk. Maybe it's a flicker of hope when you realize you are excited to see a new movie coming to the theater. Hope comes back to us in small ways and for short bursts. Slowly, these bursts and small moments grow, and we start to have goals and dreams again. It happens at different times for everyone, and it often happens slower than we want.

Sometimes people start to embrace hope and new dreams so readily that they feel *guilty* about their new journey. They think about their loved one less, cry less and talk to their loved one less. It feels like a betrayal to spend less time with the memories of someone so important. It may be helpful to think about our loved one's legacy as becoming a *part* of our lives – their memory is seamlessly integrated with our daily life. The goal is not to forget our loved ones, nor is it to dwell upon the loss every second of the day. Perhaps the best intention is to find ways to live with our loved ones as a part of the daily activities we do.



## Activity Suggestions

- Keep track of the moments when you think to yourself, “I can't wait,” or “I'm excited about...” These moments indicate that you are experiencing hope again as you are looking forward to the future.
- When you think about the activities and events that give you joy, imagine all the ways these activities honor your loved one. Perhaps you participate in them in honor of your loved one, or maybe you imagine how much your loved one would love seeing you happy.
- Find some sort of token that symbolizes hope for you. Butterflies are often used as a symbol because a butterfly hibernates in a cocoon before materializing into the world, just as someone spends time grieving before emerging with hope.

# One-Year Anniversary: Remembering Our Loved Ones

**“Grief is love turned into an eternal missing.” – Rosamund Lupton, Sister**

You are receiving this bereavement newsletter around the one-year anniversary of the death of your loved one. It is difficult to capture all the significance of the one-year anniversary. On one hand, we want to acknowledge the difficulty of this day. The one-year anniversary likely brings back the painful memories of realizing your loved one died. You may relive that day in your head, as well as all the decisions and moments leading up to it. It also might be painful to realize that a year has passed, and this means an entire year separates you from the time you still had your loved one.



The one-year anniversary – and all the emotions and memories associated with it – can be painful.

We also want to acknowledge that the one-year anniversary has positive significance. The fact that you made it through a year after the death of your loved one is a testament to your courage and resilience. Additionally, you have likely experienced growth in the past year. Perhaps you gained more self-awareness in the midst of your grief, and you are now more cognizant of your own needs. Or maybe you learned how to do a new skill – you may have learned to how better handle household matters. Moreover, you may have gained new friends in the past year, or grown closer to the people you already had in your life. Experiencing grief in the past year has likely caused positive growth, even though the loss has been extremely painful.

The pain, changes and growth that you experienced this year will not stop simply because you have reached the one-year anniversary of your loved one’s death. You will continue to experience pain, change and growth in the future. Our hope is that they will feel less intense in your second year, and our wish is that you will continue to find ways to live with the loss of your loved one.

We encourage you to continue to remember your loved one and find ways to honor him or her. In the article on the other side of this newsletter, we write about incorporating your loved one into your daily life. Perhaps you volunteer at an organization that was meaningful to your loved one, or maybe you realize how you care for your children is a reflection of how your loved one cared for you. Our loved one’s memories and legacies continue to impact our lives every day, and it is very powerful to acknowledge them.

## Activity Suggestions

- Find an organization whose cause was important to your loved one. Volunteer your time, donate materials or money, or find another way to support the group in honor of your loved one.
- Write a list of all the ways your loved one has had an impact on who you are. Perhaps they influenced you as a caregiver, or maybe they brought out your sense of humor. Writing down these traits will help you realize how you carry your loved one with you every day, even when you are not thinking about him or her.
- Continue to incorporate your loved one into family gatherings and traditions. Share stories about them over the dinner table, play their favorite card game or include their picture at important events.

## 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.

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