



Hospice Of Metropolitan Erie, Inc.

202 East 10th Street
Erie, PA 16503
814-456-6689

The Empty Chair / Be- reavement Newsletter



My Experience

My name is Patti and I have been blessed to be working as a Registered Nurse for Hospice of Metropolitan Erie. Twelve or thirteen years ago I didn't know that hospice even existed. I applied at a home health care agency because the hospital work I was doing didn't allow me to be the nurse I wanted to be.

The receptionist at the home care agency said that they were looking for a hospice nurse. I smiled and said I would like to apply. When I got home I looked it up to see what I had applied for. Well to my surprise I had signed up to work with the dying. My first thoughts were "no way".

So God in his own eminent wisdom had taken me down a path I didn't even know existed. Well he knew what he was doing because I love my work. Being part of the care for the dying is such a privilege. People are so fragile and their care so intimate. The patient and families are put in such a difficult position.

I can't imagine what it would feel like to have to let go of everything I've ever known to move to a place unknown.

The faith and their spirituality has to carry them through. In my experience I have found passing on to be a beautiful time. You see people do not die alone. You see them talking to relatives and other spiritual beings. It is not like you don't have choices. I have seen so many people wait for a family member or an event. One patient said the angels were here *continued on next page*

For additional information, call Hospice of Metropolitan Erie at 814-456-6689 or fax 456-8219

Myths and Facts About Grief

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The Empty Chair/Bereavement
Newsletter

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MYTH: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it.

Fact: Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

MYTH: It's important to "be strong" in the face of loss.

Fact: Feeling sad, frightened, or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to "protect" your family or friends by putting on a brave front.

Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

MYTH: If you don't cry, it means you aren't sorry about the loss.

Fact: Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.

MYTH: Grief should last about a year.

Fact: There is no right or wrong time frame for grieving. How long it takes can differ from person to person.

Continued from front cover last night but I told them I wasn't ready and that I needed 2 more weeks. She died the day she was ready. God is so compassionate. Once people come to accept "their" time to pass on you can see the peace in them.

I had a man who was not religious but he said he spent the night in the woods drinking orange juice and talking with a man in a hunting hat. After that night he was calm and ready to pass on. An architect said he had seen a place where the buildings were in shapes he had never seen with colors that were beautiful. God seems to come to people in a way they understand.

Patients don't want big things. They want a visit from a friend, their favorite desert or just to sit in the sun. Their regrets aren't that they never went on a trip to Spain. They speak more of things such as "I should have gone to my daughter's play" or "have gone to more of my son's hockey games".

This work has made me such a better person. It makes me look at my own mortality and that of the ones I love. I can't complain too much when the refrigerator doesn't work, or when I don't get my own way today. Watching people preparing to meet their Creator keeps me humble and grateful.

I feel so honored to be part of such a beautiful time. I still can't believe that God would trust me to do this work.

Many Blessings to you and those you love.

Be Well, Patti

A Hospice of Metropolitan Erie Registered Nurse

Everyone has it within his power to say, "This I am today; that I will be tomorrow."

—Louis L'Amour

Laughter and Loss

Laughter and humor are key elements in helping us go on with our life after a loss. It is not said that grief is not important. But prolonged grief can be detrimental. Tears bring us down. Laughter lifts us up. Humor can alter any situation and help us cope at the very instant we are laughing.

Humor allows us to cope with pain in three ways:

...When we are dealing with death, we are constantly being dragged down by the event: Humor diverts our attention and lifts our sagging spirits.

...Dealing with death is stressful: Humor decreases our stress and tension.

...In the midst of death, life feels out of balance: Humor provides fresh perspective and power in a powerless situation.

When we are in pain and wish that something would "take us away," humor does exactly that. It may be for only a brief moment but it distracts us from our pain and gives us hope to embrace life again. If we can laugh again, we can live again.

Yes, it is difficult to deal with the loss of a loved one. Yes, it may seem like it is the darkest time of our life. Still, there are lighter moments among the dark ones. We must be willing to let some of those tiny rays of lightness in.

True Healing

"What is healing?" Had I been asked that question as I first entered practice as a brand-new family physician, my answer would have been straight from a textbook. To heal was to cure a disease; to make someone well; to succeed in avoiding the end result that we, as physicians, view as failure: that is, death. But fourteen years in practice has made me decades wiser.

Through the years, I have had the privilege of helping countless patients and families face death and dying. What I have learned from these experiences has been invaluable to me, not only in practice, but in my own personal life as well. All of these lessons can be whittled down to one priceless pearl: Death is inevitable. It can be denied, dismissed, downplayed and even delayed. Death, however, will come. To all. Without exception.

Can healing, then, only be temporary? Is my work as a physician ultimately in vain, since all of us eventually succumb to one physical malady or another? Or is healing something else that goes beyond our physical natures, to a more permanent place in our souls?

As a Christian, I know that permanent healing is possible. The disease of sin, of which we all suffer, has a cure. Faith in Jesus Christ is our remedy, and the success rate is 100%.

It is an honor for me to be involved in the lives of my patients and their families. I dedicate myself to helping them improve their physical health when possible. When that is not feasible, I do my best to help their quality of life. The most significant impact I can have in their well-being, however, is in the spiritual realm, where true and permanent healing can be found. And spiritual healing, through faith in Christ, gives peace...the peace "that transcends all understanding." I have seen this peace in the faces of dying patients and in family members who have lost loved ones. This healing is real. It is powerful. And it is eternal.

Lisa Treusch, M.D.

Relaxation

People in pain experience both physical and emotional stress. Pain and stress have similar effects on the body: muscles tighten, breathing becomes fast and shallow, and heart rate and blood pressure go up. Relaxation can help you reverse these effects and give you a sense of control and well being that make it easier to manage pain.

Relaxation involves learning ways to calm and control your body and mind. There are no best ways to calm and control your body and mind. There is no best way to learn how to relax, as long as you relax both your body and mind. Try some of the following methods until you find one that works for you.

Progressive relaxation helps you recognize areas of pain in your body. Lie on your back in a quiet place. Begin to concentrate on how your body feels, beginning with toes. If you find tension, try to let it go. Gradually move your focus up the length of your body, releasing tensions as you go.

Guided imagery uses your mind to focus on pleasant images. First, begin by breathing slowly and deeply. Think of yourself in a place where you feel comfortable, safe, and relaxed. Create all the details in your mind—the colors, sounds, smells and feelings. These images take your mind away from the pain and focus it on something more pleasant.

Prayer is a universal way to relax and bring comfort and peace of mind. It's helpful to focus your mind on one thing—it can be an image, a place, a white light, a candle flame or whatever is restful to you.

Relaxation audiotapes and videotapes can help to guide you through the relaxation process. These tapes provide directions for relaxation process. These tapes provide directions for relaxation so you don't have to recall the instructions. You might also want to make your own tape of your favorite relaxation routine.

Distraction works because the human mind has trouble focusing on more than one thing at a time. When you feel pain, redirect your thoughts to an activity that holds your interest. It can be anything from walking to reading to gardening to volunteer work.

Permission granted by: Gertrude Simmons

MISSION STATEMENT

Hospice of Metropolitan Erie, Inc.

Hospice of Metropolitan Erie (HOME) is committed to providing care of the highest standard to enhance the quality of life of the terminally ill and their families, and the community.

The 10 Best and Worst Things to Say to Someone in Grief

Keep in mind, context, timing and who is saying them is everything!

The Worst Things to Say to Someone in Grief

1. At least she lived a long life, many people die young.
2. He is in a better place.
3. She brought this on herself.
4. There is a reason for everything.
5. Aren't you over him yet, he has been dead for awhile now.
6. You can have another child still.
7. She was such a good person God wanted her to be with him.
8. I know how you feel.
9. She did what she came here to do and it was her time to go.
10. Be Strong.

The Best Things to Say to Someone in Grief

1. I am so sorry for your loss.
2. I wish I had the right words, just know I care.
3. I don't know how you feel, but I am here to help in anyway.
4. You and your loved one will be in my thoughts and prayers.
5. My favorite memory of your loved one is...
6. I am always just a phone call away.
7. Give a hug instead of saying something.
8. We all usually up early or late, if you need anything.
9. We all need help at times like this, I am here for you.
10. Saying nothing, just be with the person.

Many of us have said "The Best" and "The Worst." We meant no harm, in fact the opposite. We were trying to comfort. A grieving person may say one of the worst ones about themselves and it's OK. It may make sense for a member of the clergy to say, "He is in a better place" when someone comes to them for guidance. Where as an acquaintance saying it may not feel good.

Tips for Helping the Bereaved

- Be available. Offer support in an unobtrusive but persistent manner.
- Listen without giving advice.
- Do not offer stories of your own. This can have the effect of dismissing the grieving person's pain.
- Allow the grieving person to use expressions of anger or bitterness, including such expressions against God. This may be normal behavior in an attempt to find meaning in what has happened.
- Realize that no one can replace or undo the loss. To heal, the individual must endure the grief process. Allow him/her to feel the pain.
- Be patient, kind and understanding without being patronizing. Don't claim to "know" what the other person is feeling.
- Don't force the individual to share feelings if he/she doesn't want to.
- Be there later, when friends and family have all gone back to their routines.



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*The phoenix
 symbolizes the
 human spirit's
 ability to rise
 above life's most
 painful moments.*

You are invited to help Hospice in our work, ensuring the comfort and dignity of our community's members in the closing days of life.

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YOUR DONATION IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE—THANK YOU.

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