

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2024

CALVARY IN TOUCH



FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT OUR BEREAVEMENT LINE:

718-518-2281 | calvarybereavement@calvaryhospital.org

GREETINGS

Summer is a time for vacation, rest, relaxation, and restoration. But for persons who are grieving the loss of a family member or friend, the summertime can be filled with bittersweet memories of family vacations, outdoor barbeque gatherings, mom's signature dish, grandma's dessert, dad or granddad by the BBQ grill, or outdoor games with siblings, family, and friends. These bittersweet memories can evoke both feelings of heartfelt delight and feelings of sadness and guilt.

A grieving person feeling guilty about summer fun can have a recurring internal dialogue in their heads, like: "Why should I be having fun; I should be feeling sad." "I don't deserve to feel happy in the summer." "My family member is no longer here to share in the fun." "I will drag everyone down with my mopey attitude and ruin everyone's vacation." "If I go on vacation, I just want to be on my own." These thoughts and feelings are common for many who are grieving. You are not alone.

**CALVARY
HOSPITAL**

Where Life Continues

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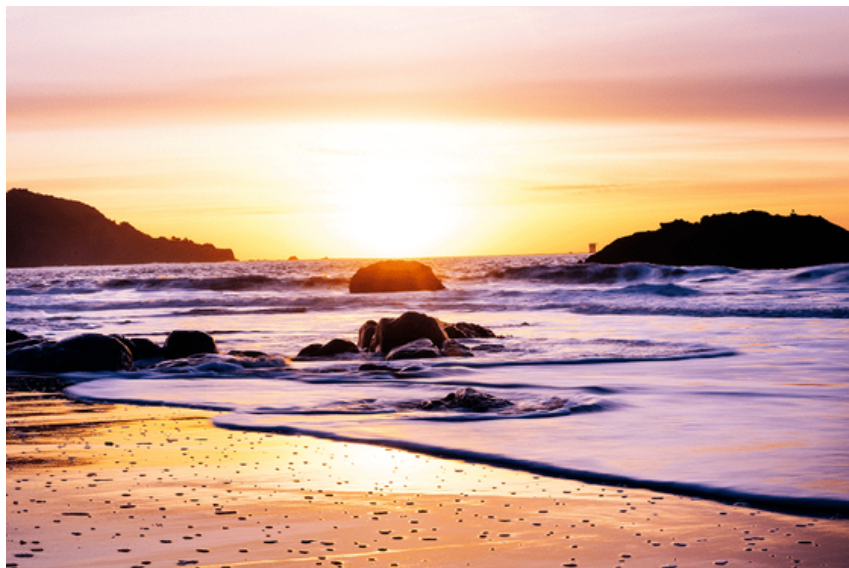
GREETINGS, CONTINUED

By using your imagination and your five senses, you can try befriending the guilt about a summer vacation by shifting from these recurring thoughts to allowing other feelings to emerge. Try imagining summer vacation as an opportunity to allow your senses to experience the many things that the summer has to offer. Notice and savor the sights, sounds, smells, flavors, and textures of nature and the outdoors.

If you are at the beach, notice and savor the ebb and flow of the ocean surf, the salty smell and taste of the sea, the cool or warm feel of seawater on the skin.

If you are in the forest or a mountainous region, notice and savor the colors of the trees and leaves, the fragrance of leaves and flowers, the many textures of the terrain, the taste of cool water quenching your thirst after a hike.

Allow yourself to have a summer vacation that is a contemplative, mindful, and sensual experience. By applying your five senses in the outdoors, you are allowing yourself to be absorbed in the beauty of your surroundings, you are practicing self-care and self-compassion, and you are quelling, befriending, and walking alongside the guilt.



WRITTEN BY
Edgardo Lugo, MS, LCSW-R, RPT-S, CGP
Director of Bereavement Services

FINDING COMMUNITY IN MY GRIEF

In February 2023, I watched my father take his last breaths in the palliative care unit of a hospital in upper Manhattan, just weeks after being diagnosed with liver cancer. My dad was my favorite person. He, more than anyone else in my life, made me the person I am today. I get from him my sensitivity, my humor, my love of travel and music, and my deep appreciation for community. My dad experienced a lot of loss in his life. He lost his father two weeks before his second birthday, and, in 2002, his first wife (my mom) and then his mother five months later. He knew life was fleeting, and it was most important to surround yourself with people who lift you.

Like my dad, I am lucky to have a community of family and friends I often lean on when life gets hard. Because of that, I felt unprepared for the feelings of loneliness and isolation that came with my grief. Nobody quite knows what to say to someone who has just lost a second parent before their 30th birthday. Is there even a right thing to say? Even as my partner, family, and friends did things big and small to show their support, there were feelings I simply could not put into words or didn't want to.

In this isolation, and on the recommendation of a palliative care doctor I had met serendipitously through my job, I sought out a bereavement group at Calvary Hospital. I didn't know what to expect from this group, but, on a Wednesday in September, I nervously entered a Zoom call and took a leap of faith. What I found was a community and a weekly reprieve from the loneliness of my grief. Over the following weeks, I began to open up to these strangers. It was cathartic. As a fellow group member said, "I can't quite put my finger on why this group is so helpful. All I know is I always feel better at the end than I did at the beginning."

Grief is full of contradictions—anger, sadness, pain, and sometimes even laughter. What I felt most acutely was the desire to feel "normal" again, juxtaposed with the guilt of allowing myself to "move on," which felt like I was leaving my dad in the past. Sometimes it feels like our grief is the only connection we still hold to our loved ones and allowing that grief to ebb even for a moment can feel like a betrayal of their memory. We can try to explain these contradictions to our friends who are lucky enough to have never lost, but sometimes words fail. Sometimes we crave a space where our feelings don't need complicated explanations because we just know. We know about the bittersweet passage of time and the healing, scarring, and reopening of wounds with each passing holiday or birthday.

I began to know my group mates' grief almost as well as I knew my own, understanding why a particular day might be hard for one person or another. I sent and received texts on holidays and anniversaries, just checking in, knowing we were each fighting a private battle and doing our best not to let it show. When I recently got engaged, one of the first people who reached out after seeing the photos on social media was a group member, who I now consider a close friend. She knew my grief well enough to understand that a small piece of me would be holding onto the guilt of living a happy life without my dad. She not only congratulated me but encouraged me to take it all in as a purely happy moment. And while I still ache at the thought of him not being able to walk me down the aisle, I am grateful that I had someone to remind me in that moment that it was okay to just be happy.

I am immensely grateful to have shared this space for the past nine months or so, and for the confidence it has given me to move forward in my grief. But in the end, it's the people I'll think of the most, and the biggest contradiction of all: we wish we didn't have to meet, but we're glad we did.



Rachel and her father, Michael Schwartz

WRITTEN BY
Rachel Schwartz
Bereavement Group Member

HOSPICE

No one sets out thinking about the question: “What if I become terminally ill?” Or, what is hospice? When should I sign up for it? Why would we? After all, we are fully embracing life and enjoying everyone and everything in it. That special person enters your life and together we build a partnership, a connection. A life filled with unconditional love between two people. That is what I had with my partner/spouse/wife of 40 years.

We did everything together: teachers at the same school, making our home, and rescuing a dog. Sharon was diagnosed with a form of muscular dystrophy ten years after we met. It was a slow progressing dystrophy of which very little was known. She did everything in the ensuing years, retiring early in order to do things she wanted. We were not prepared for the rapid decline the disease took. Sharon was confined to bed during her last year. Muscular dystrophy took away her physical abilities but not her voice. We still had as a normal of a life together because we could still communicate.

I was very much in denial with Sharon’s declining health as September rolled around. Intellectually, I knew Sharon needed greater care. But emotionally, I couldn’t bring myself to the reality that our time together was moving in another direction, let alone acknowledge that Sharon needed hospice. And there it is, hospice. Seven letters that tear your heart out. Because you know it’s the final journey for providing care and comfort for your loved one. It’s a decision made with sadness. But when you speak with the very first person at Calvary, you are embraced with comfort and kindness.

Sharon, her best friend/sister-in-law, and I cried when we had the discussion. On reflection, we did feel relief. The attention, support and care provided by Calvary was simply a gift that was given to us, at our most sad and vulnerable time. Sharon passed away on October 3, 2023. It was the worst day of my life. I was not alone, the bereavement services offered by Calvary were there for me when I was ready.

I was in shock over losing Sharon and it took some time to reach out. I am grateful that Calvary was consistent in sending letters about their services. It was the push and reminder to take that first step. I spoke with a wonderfully supportive social worker, who always reminded me that there is no right or wrong way to grieve, as well as “tools” to cope with my grief, and most importantly, to let the tears flow. I joined the bereavement group for spouses/partners shortly after.

Our group is very similar in that we were together with our spouses for a long time. We are also all close in age. This is very helpful because we can truly relate to one another. We learn a lot from each other and feel love, comfort and support. It is a wonderful group, all feeling the same thing, grief.

My heartfelt sorrow goes out to you in the passing of your loved one. The bereavement services are there for you when you are ready. You never have to be alone on this journey. There are many people to support you.

I have nothing but gratitude for Calvary. I don’t know where I would be without them.



Sharon

WRITTEN BY
Denise LaMagna

Hospice Bereavement Group Member

VIRTUAL BEREAVEMENT GROUPS

DEATH OF A SPOUSE/PARTNER

Tuesday 1:00 - 2:30 PM
Wednesday 5:30 - 7:00 PM
Facilitator: Joanne Castellanos
917-574-4941
jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org

Monday 11:00 - 12:30 PM
Facilitator: Edgardo Lugo
347-963-7001
elugo@calvaryhospital.org

Thursday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Facilitator: Jackeline Abbondandolo
347-949-1266
jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

Thursday 3:00 - 4:30 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

ADULT DEATH OF A PARENT

Tuesday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Wednesday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Facilitator: Jackeline Abbondandolo
347-949-1266
jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

Thursday 5:30 - 7:00 PM
Facilitator: Joanne Castellanos
917-574-4941
jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org

Friday 10:00 - 11:30 AM
Facilitator: Edgardo Lugo
347-963-7001
elugo@calvaryhospital.org

ADULT DEATH OF A SIBLING

Tuesday 5:30 - 7:00 PM
Facilitator: Joanne Castellanos
917-574-4941
jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org

Wednesday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Facilitator: Spring Kwok
917-658-0484
skwok@calvaryhospital.org

DEATH OF A CHILD

Death of a Child
Monday 5:30 - 7:00 PM

Death of a Child - 2 years and beyond
2nd & 4th Thursday 12:30 - 2:00 PM

Facilitator: Joanne Castellanos
917-574-4941
jcastellanos@calvaryhospital.org

DEATH RELATED TO SUBSTANCE USE

Friday 12:30 - 2:00 PM
Facilitator: Spring Kwok
917-658-0484
skwok@calvaryhospital.org

DEATH DUE TO HOMICIDE

Thursday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Facilitator: Spring Kwok
917-658-0484
skwok@calvaryhospital.org

VIRTUAL BEREAVEMENT GROUPS

TWEENS AGES 10-12

Tuesday 5:00 - 6:30 PM
Thursday 5:30 - 7:00 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

TEENS AGES 13-17

Tuesday 4:00 - 5:30 PM
Facilitator: Spring Kwok
917-658-0484
skwok@calvaryhospital.org

Thursday 4:00 - 5:30 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

YOUNG ADULTS AGES 18-35

Tuesday 6:00 - 7:30 PM
Facilitator: Spring Kwok
917-658-0484
skwok@calvaryhospital.org

MEN'S DISCUSSION

1st Thursday 12:30 - 2:00PM
Facilitator: Jackeline Abbondandolo
347-949-1266
jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

SPANISH SPEAKING

Tuesday 12:00 - 1:30 PM
Facilitator: Edgardo Lugo
347-963-7001
elugo@calvaryhospital.org

IN-PERSON BEREAVEMENT GROUPS

PRECIOUS MOMENTS AGES 6-9

Monday 4:00 - 5:30 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

Parent/Guardian Group:
Runs concurrently with Precious Moments
Monday 4:00 - 5:30 PM
Facilitator: Jackeline Abbondandolo
347-949-1266
jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

DEATH OF A YOUNG CHILD

Wednesday TBD
Facilitator: Jackeline Abbondandolo
347-949-1266
jabbondandolo@calvaryhospital.org

MINDFULNESS AND MOVEMENT THROUGH GRIEF

Wednesday 2:00 - 3:30 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

DEATH DUE TO SUICIDE

Monday 11:00 - 12:30 PM
Facilitator: Jacqueline Marlow
917-708-0133
jmarlow@calvaryhospital.org

WE ARE LOCATED AT:



Calvary Hospital
1740 Eastchester Road
Bronx, NY 10461



Calvary Hospital's Annual Bereavement Education Program

Calvary Hospital's 31st Annual Bereavement Education Program begins this March and is designed for those in the helping professions, and not for bereaved family members. Taught by various specialists from Calvary Hospital and Hospice, these courses examine different bereavement and grief-related issues.

There will be 10 courses offered once a month on Wednesday nights from March to December 2024. Participants can attend any one course for \$40 (2 contact hours each), or all 10 for \$400 (total of 20 contact hours). Each course meets live on Zoom and will not be recorded. Attendees must be present with cameras on during the days and times the courses are offered in order to receive contact hours.

Successful completion requires that participants: (1) register for the course, and (2) complete course evaluations for each lecture attended.

Contact hours are approved by the following organizations:

- 1. Calvary Hospital, Bereavement Services is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Board for Social Work as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed social workers #SW-0158.*
- 2. Calvary Hospital, Bereavement Services is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Board for Mental Health Practitioners as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed mental health counselors #MHC-0162.*

Course Fees

- \$40 for an individual course (2 contact hours)
- \$400 for all 10 courses (20 contact hours)

**For more information,
contact Spring Kwok at:
917-658-0484 or
skwok@calvaryhospital.org**

Note: No commercial support was received for this educational activity

Calvary Hospital's Annual Bereavement Education Program Schedule

Wednesdays

DATE & TIME	TOPIC	PRESENTER
March 27 6:00 - 8:00 PM EST	Overview and Fundamentals of Grief	Edgardo Lugo, MS, LCSW-R, RPT-S, CGP
April 24 6:00 - 8:00 PM EST	Delirium and Depression Grief and Bereavement from the Hospice Perspective	Dr. Robert Brescia Rachel Borg, LMSW
May 29 6:00 - 8:00 PM EST	Traumatic Grief and Recovery Interventions	Spring Kwok, LMSW
June 26 6:00 - 7:00 PM EST 7:00 - 8:00 PM EST	Coping with Death of a Parent and Death of a Spouse; Legacy in Grief	Jackeline Abbondandolo, MS, LMHC Rachel Borg, LMSW
July 31 6:00 - 8:00 PM EST	Grief and Play Therapy with Children in Different Clinical Settings	Rachel Borg, LMSW Spring Kwok, LMSW Jacqueline Marlow, MA, CAT-LP
August 28 6:00 - 8:00 PM EST	Initiating Bereavement Support Groups and Interventions	Jackeline Abbondandolo, MS, LMHC
September 25 6:00 - 8:00 PM EST	Coping with Death of a Child and Death of a Sibling	Joanne Castellanos, MA, LMHC, FT
October 30 6:00 - 8:00 PM EST	Understanding Childhood Grief and Therapeutic Intervention	Spring Kwok, LMSW Jacqueline Marlow, MA, CAT-LP
November 20 6:00 - 8:00 PM EST	Spirituality and Grief	Edgardo Lugo, MS, LCSW-R, RPT-S, CGP
December 11 6:00 - 8:00 PM EST	Meaning Making, Compassion Fatigue, Self-Care, Closing Ritual	Stephanie Newman, LMSW

Schedule is subject to change without notice.

Note: No commercial support was received for this educational activity

INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and its lingering aftermath, many of us continue to grapple with unprecedented emotional and mental health challenges; if you're feeling overwhelmed, please remember that you're not alone, and don't hesitate to reach out to Calvary's Individual Counseling Services for the support and guidance you deserve during these trying times. These services attract a nominal fee.

If you would like more information, please call 718-518-2281, or email calvarybereavement@calvaryhospital.org.

TREE OF LIFE



Calvary Hospital complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

Through the Tree of Life, we can recognize your significant naming gift in a permanent and meaningful manner. Your significant person's name will exist in perpetuity with the lifetime of the Hospital. This is a loving way of memorializing someone special to you or saying thank you, because your gift of love helps patients and families today and for many years to come.

For more information, please call 718-518-2689.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

Calvary In Touch has been made possible by a generous bequest from Michael Camara.