Rituals of Grief

By A.C., Grief Counselor Intern, The Denver Hospice

The word “ritual” brings to mind an act of acknowledgement for something or someone significant. These acts may be large or small, singular or ongoing, happy or sad, public or private. I have found, in my own grief, that ritual can be a means of celebration of an individual, an honoring of their memory, and a way to hold them close as I continue on in life. Ritual has also provided an opportunity for me to part with experiences I no longer wish to carry. The following are three stories from my own life of how I have used ritual in the grieving process. My hope is that, in seeing the ways I have used rituals, you will be inspired to create some of your own.

When I started attending college, I gave my Grandpa Frank a baseball cap with my school logo. Every time I saw him leave the house after that, he was wearing the hat. When he wore it, he couldn’t help but tell everyone that I gave him the hat and that I was his “pride and joy.” Now, I wear my Grandpa’s hat whenever I go hiking. I imagine that I’m bringing him along on the hike, and take a moment to pause and remember our special relationship. At these times, I can’t help but smile and feel that he is still with me.

My Uncle Moose was a man who truly embodied what it meant to live life. In my family, we tell stories of his countless adventures and ridiculous shenanigans. He always operated on “Moose Time,” which meant that he lived by his own agenda and at the pace he felt comfortable (essentially two hours behind everyone else). When he died, I decided to honor his memory by making a bucket list. I’m amazed with the things I have seen and accomplished as a result of his inspiration. I remember his life by continuing to live my own. Every time I do something from the list, I see him smiling proudly and I hear his encouraging words.

Continued on page 3...
ADULT SUPPORT GROUPS (Series Groups)

**Newly Bereaved Group**
A 4-week, educational and participatory support group for adults who have experienced a death loss within the last three months. We invite you to register for one of the upcoming series, to be offered from **12:00 Noon to 1:30 PM on:**
- **Tuesdays in April** (April 4, 11, 18, 25);
- **Tuesdays in May** (May 2, 9, 16, 23); and
- **Tuesdays in June** (June 6, 13, 20, 27).
*Suggested fee:* $60. *Registration by telephone is required.*

**Going Through Grief Group**
A 6-week, educational and participatory support group for adults grieving any significant death loss. Group members should allow at least three months from their loss before starting this group. This group will run in the fall of 2017. Please see our next newsletter for more information. *Suggested fee:* $100 for Hospice clients; $120 for Community Bereaved. *Registration by application is required.*

**Creative Arts Grief Group**
A 6-week support group for adults who are interested in exploring art, writing, and other creative tools for expressing and working through their grief. This group will meet on Thursday evenings of March 16, 23, 30, and April 6, 13, 20, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. *Suggested fee* (includes the cost of art materials): $120 for Hospice clients; $140 for Community Bereaved. *Registration by application is required.*

INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT

**Individual Adult Counseling**
At times, the grief process offers challenges that respond best to individualized support. Grief counseling is provided by trained counselors. The first three sessions are free to adult family and friends of patients of The Denver Hospice. Sliding scale fees are available to Community Bereaved individuals.

**Footprints Children's Grief Center**
The Footprints Children’s Grief Center provides individual counseling for children and teens, ages 4-17. Support groups are offered through our partnering agency, Judi’s House. Please call Whitney Haney, MA, at 303-398-6213 for a personalized grief support recommendation for your child.

Grief Support Resources Near You
If the location, dates, or times of our grief support services make it difficult for you to attend, please call us for information about community grief support resources near you.

---

**Candle Light Remembrance Ceremony**

**Tuesday • March 14, 2017 • 7:00 to 8:30 PM**

The Denver Hospice Grief Center invites you to honor the life of your loved one — with music, poetry, the lighting of candles, and the sharing of memories — at our next **Candle Light Remembrance Ceremony**.

Please join us at The Horan and McConaty Chapel:
1091 South Colorado Blvd. (at Mississippi Ave.), Denver, CO 80246.

Light refreshments will be served.
For further information, please call Karl Shackelford at 303-398-6234.
Rituels of Grief

…Continued from page 1

Ritual can also be a way to hold feelings or memories that are difficult to visit. For example, someone recently died who had brought a great deal of pain to my life. There was much left unsaid, as we had not spoken for several years. There had never been any opportunity to express my experience of being hurt. I found myself wanting to acknowledge their death, express my feelings, and grieve in a way that felt comfortable. I started this ritual by sitting quietly at a nearby creek. I listened to the sound of the water, watching as it rushed down and away. I imagined all of the pain, guilt, and shame that I still held from this relationship leaving my body and floating away with the water. Then I walked along the bank and picked up three rocks that caught my attention. As I stood by the rushing water, I imagined that the rocks stood for three specific ways in which his person had hurt me. I hurled each rock as hard as I could into the creek, and after all had been thrown, I realized I no longer needed to carry the pain they represented with me.

Grief can feel overpowering, yet we often believe that if we start to feel better we are letting go of the person who died. In cultivating grief rituals, we find ways to continue expressing love, to cherish memories, and to continue relationships. On the other hand, grief rituals can provide ways to untangle forms of pain that no longer serve us. As you create your own rituals, give yourself permission to address what you feel that you need. Allow yourself to both hold and release.

SPECIAL FOCUS GROUP

Healing Practices for Coping with Grief

Thursday evenings:

May 4, 11, 18, 25, and June 1, 8 ✧ 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Together we will spend time sharing about our different experiences of grief, exploring what to expect as we are grieving, and talking about how to cope. We will discuss ideas of what healthy grieving looks like, as well as tools for navigating this often painful process. Activities may include writing, walking outdoors, art making, mindfulness exercises, and more. Our goal is for you to develop a better understanding of your own grief, and create personalized coping tools for the future.

This group is meant for adults grieving any significant death loss, who have had more than 3 months since their loss by the time the group begins.

Suggested fee: $100

For more information, or to register for this group, please contact Whitney Haney at 303-398-6213.
GRIEF

Grief is like an old, slow-moving river, full of oxbows and pools of unexpected depths. It won’t be rushed or pushed and I am destined to walk beside it through all the seasons of my life. But sunlight glints off the still waters of the pools sometimes and the sky arcs like a blue bowl overhead. There are worse places to spend my life, learning lessons only this river can teach: compassion for myself and others; facing each moment as it unfolds; and perhaps most important, keeping my heart open.

THE END

By Pamela Carter

The Denver Hospice Grief Center

Poetry Corner

The Denver Hospice Grief Center offers expert and comprehensive grief support services, including:

- individual counseling for adults, individual counseling for children,
- grief counseling for families
- support groups for adults
- art therapy for adults
- art therapy for children
- education and information
- community referrals