

# Sound Waves



*“Every day is a new beginning, take a deep breath and start again.”*

*–Author Unknown*

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## *Tending Your Broken Heart*

Grief can feel like a roller-coaster. Tears may well up at unexpected times. Some days it may be difficult to sleep and other days it may feel impossible to get out of bed. Glimpses of peace and joy may appear, only to disappear behind clouds of sorrow and turmoil. Bursts of energy may be followed by days when simply putting one foot in front of the other is a struggle.

Your loved one has died and your heart feels broken. The reality that life is forever changed is slowly sinking in. Now – when you are most in need of tender loving care for yourself – you may find it nearly impossible to find the energy and motivation to

give yourself that care, or to reach out to others and allow them to care for you. For the first few weeks, especially when the loved one who died was of major importance in your day-to-day life, it may feel like an enormous accomplishment to simply get out of bed, eat a bit, soak a while in the bath and do whatever practical tasks must be done. And please, give yourself credit for that basic self-care.

Fortunately, a day will dawn when you feel able to do more to tend your broken heart. There are many approaches to self care and the most important thing is to find those that fit your unique needs. For example, if you have always derived joy from music, you might select those pieces you find most comforting and make it a point to listen to them. If you have always found exercise to be a stress relief, you might begin to ease back into your preferred physical

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activity. Perhaps the company of a beloved friend is the best medicine. If so, now is the time to set aside the unfortunate myth that you must always be strong and let them know you need them.

One kind of self care that is relatively easy and often effective at calming the turbulent waters of distressed hearts and minds is breath work. A simple series of slow, gentle breaths can often bring swirling thoughts and emotions to a more peaceful place. If you'd like to give it a try, here are two basic breath work techniques for beginners recommended by Certified Yoga Instructor and Psychotherapist, Harvey LeSure, MSW, LICSW. You can begin by finding a comfortable place to sit, and then maintain a relaxed upright posture with feet on the floor, back supported and your spine gently elongated.

Now, just begin to notice the sensation of your breath moving in and out of your nostrils. It is perfectly natural for your attention to wander. Just gently keep returning your attention to the sensation of your breath. You may notice that without even trying, your breath will gradually slow, and you may also begin to take slightly deeper breaths. There is no need to force this. Just allow your breathing to relax.

You may notice that your breath tends to feel cool as it enters your body. If it feels right, you might try imagining that along with your cool in-breath comes fresh, renewed energy and life. You may also notice that your breath tends to feel warmer as it leaves your body. If it feels right, you might try imagining that along with your warmed out-breath goes fear, anger, and/or anxiety. You can continue gently noticing your breath coming and going as long as you like. If it feels more peaceful to leave out the visualization, then just notice your breath.

Another simple breath work process requires just a bit more focused attention. Once again, find a comfortable place to sit, and then, breathing only through your nose, not through your mouth, just notice your own pattern of breathing. It is natural for your attention to wander sometimes. Just gently bring it back to noticing your own natural breathing pattern. After a couple of minutes begin to count silently to yourself in a relaxed way. Count as you

breathe in - 1...2...3, and as you breathe out - 1...2...3. After couple more minutes, begin to gently breathe a little more slowly and a little more deeply. You may notice that it now feels right to count 1...2...3...4 on the in and out breath.

Rest in that slightly slower breathing pattern for a couple of minutes, and then, keeping your in-breath the same length, on your next out-breath slow it down just a bit so you can add one to your count (1...2...3...4...5). Maintain that rhythm for several breaths, until it feels comfortable, and then slow your out-breath just a little bit more (1...2...3...4...5...6). If you start to feel anxious or uncomfortable, just return to your prior rate of breathing. Many people find the gradual slowing of the out-breath to have a calming effect, but some people find it uncomfortable. Trust your own responses to decide if this process is helpful or not.

You may have noticed that the basic attitude of these breath work exercises is gentleness, patience and a relaxed awareness and acceptance of what you are experiencing. If you can bring this basic attitude to yourself as you grieve, regardless of whether you do one moment of these breath work techniques or not, you will be truly tending to your broken heart.

*-Rose VandenBerghe, MA, LMHC,  
Bereavement Services Assistant*

### **Recommended Readings**

*"Grieving Mindfully: A Compassionate and Spiritual Guide to Coping with Loss"*

By Sameet Kumar, PhD

*"Self Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself Up and Leave Insecurity Behind"*

By Kristin Neff, PhD

# G R I E F

I had my own notion of grief.  
I thought it was the sad time  
That followed the death of someone you love.  
And you had to push through it  
To get to the other side.  
But I'm learning there is no other side.  
There is no pushing through.  
But rather,  
There is absorption.  
Adjustment.  
Acceptance.  
And grief is not something you complete,  
But rather, you endure.  
Grief is not a task to finish  
And move on,  
But an element of yourself-  
An alteration of your being.  
A new way of seeing.  
A new definition of self.

- Gwen Flowers

## SoundCare Kids

GRIEF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN, TEENS, AND THE ADULTS WHO CARE FOR THEM.

Children, teens and their caregivers have found understanding and support at SoundCareKids for almost 20 years. Group nights begin with pizza and play. Then kids, teens and caregivers meet in small groups (Littles 5-8, Middles 9-12, Teens, and Caregivers) for discussion and activities designed to explore different aspects of grief. Each week builds on the concepts, discussions, and activities of the previous week, so attending all six weeks is recommended. Our regular session topics include:

- Week 1** Learning about grief and getting to know each other
- Week 2** Exploring feelings and learning how to cope with them
- Week 3** Sharing our stories
- Week 4** Dealing with regret, guilt, and other unfinished business
- Week 5** Identifying and adjusting to changes
- Week 6** Memories and staying connected

The SoundCareKids program is provided at no cost to families in Thurston, Lewis and Mason counties through funding from the Providence St. Peter Foundation.

Call Providence SoundHomeCare and Hospice at 360-493-5928 for more information about individual or family counseling or to reserve your spots in the upcoming session. Pre-registration is required.

### 2014 Winter Grief Support Session

Thursdays, 6:15 to 7:45 p.m.  
January 23–February 27

### 2014 Spring Grief Support Session

Thursdays, 6:15 to 7:45 p.m.  
April 10–May 15



<http://on.fb.me/ikYfdd>

# How can I help my child learn to cope with grief?

## Building a self-care toolbox.

Children process grief very differently than adults depending on their age and developmental stage. Children's understanding of the permanency of death doesn't typically occur until 8-9 years of age. Even older children and teens who can better understand death may not have the vocabulary to describe what they're feeling.

With this limited understanding, grief feelings can be scary and confusing. It then becomes very important for parents and caregivers to watch for and interpret children's and teens' grief behaviors. Children's play can be a rich source of information on what your child is thinking and feeling. Children may use objects such as stuffed animals or dolls to project their feelings and themes related to loss may come up. Teens may be more difficult to read, but behavioral changes are usually a good indicator.

When young children do express grief feelings it commonly shows up in brief bursts: intense crying and fears, angry outbursts, regression, clinginess, nightmares and mood swings are common and often come up without warning. Older

children and teens may experience grief symptoms such as difficulty connecting to peers, withdrawal, lethargy, eating changes, depression and anxiety. Teaching children and teens about how to tend to these intense feelings is an important step in their healing and emotional growth.

One way to help children and teens in their grief is by creating a self-care "toolbox." The function of a toolbox is having the right tool handy when you need it, in one place. The idea of self-care is to focus on activities that promote health and wellbeing. The tools needed to help with grief can be very different than the skills and tools that are useful in every day life. Helping your child build a self-care "tool box" will teach your child or teen the skills he/she needs to manage their grief in a healthy way. It's also a way to bring you and your child closer together. Parents and caregivers can also create their own self-care toolbox as a way to model self-care and healthy expression of grief feelings.

To create the self-care toolbox, first find a container to serve as the "toolbox." It can be an actual toolbox

or it can be any size or shaped container that your child chooses. Get creative! Decorating the outside or even inside of the box is encouraged! Next, brainstorm things that the child/teen likes and makes them feel good. It can be anything from foods, to games, pictures, or music, objects such as stuffed animals or mementos, books, poems or activities such as yoga, dance or hugs. They can be the objects themselves or representations of those objects such as cards with the activity written or drawn on them. Visiting the toolbox on a regular basis will help to reinforce healthy coping skills and can even inspire new ideas.

*-Shell St Onge MS, LMHC,  
SoundCare Kids Counselor*

## Recommended Readings

For children: *"Sometimes I Feel Like a Storm Cloud"* By Lezlie Evans

For teens: *"Weird is Normal When Teenagers Grieve"* By Jenny Lee Wheeler



**Providence SoundHomeCare and Hospice**

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[www.providence.org/pshch](http://www.providence.org/pshch)

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# *Grief Support for All Ages*

Providence SoundHomeCare and Hospice provides a full range of grief support and bereavement services for adults and children. We can help you better understand and cope with your grief, while offering support and opportunities to learn and grow.

**See INSIDE** for more information!

## COIN OF THIS REALM

This is not despair,  
Not the retreat into the deep wound but a conscious living of each day  
This is the placing of one foot before the other,  
Not the free stride of the unencumbered but the careful tread of the initiated foot  
This is learning how to walk without familiar landmarks, alone even in the company of others,  
Not ready for a new direction  
This is the living of each day, aware that what you cannot predict may still loose sudden tears,  
Yet that laughter too is possible  
This is when you struggle as plants in arid soil strive  
without conscious knowing to stay alive until the rain  
This is a time for faith that this most naked agony of loss will ease,  
And not corrode the spirit  
This is the time to trust that day after labored day you will move forward,  
Open to joy as well as pain;  
Two-sided coin, you proffer for remembrance

– Maude Meehan

# Adult Support Groups

Every individual has the capacity to heal and grow after the life-altering experience of a major loss. Our goal is to help people understand and cope with their grief while offering support and opportunities to learn and grow. We help people identify needs and strengths and work with them to develop a plan to address these. We work with individuals, families and groups in the community.

*For information about individual counseling or to make an appointment call: 360-493-4667.*



## ADULT SUPPORT GROUPS (Ongoing)

### Daytime

- 1st and 3rd Monday of each month  
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.  
Lacey Presbyterian Church  
3045 Carpenter Rd. SE, Lacey  
Information: 360-493-4667
- 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month  
1:30 to 3:00 p.m.  
Shelton Health and Rehabilitation Center  
153 Johns Court, Shelton  
Information: 360-493-4667

### Evening

- 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month  
6:00 to 7:30 p.m.  
Providence SoundHomeCare and Hospice  
3432 South Bay Rd. NE, Olympia  
Information: 360-493-4667
- Loss of Child Support Group  
(The Compassionate Friends)  
1st Monday of each month  
7:00 to 8:30 p.m.  
Providence St. Peter Hospital (Executive Mtg. Room)  
413 Lilly Rd. NE, Olympia  
Information: Allen Roth at 360-402-6711