



Sound Waves



“ *Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness.
It took me years to understand that this, too, was a gift.* ”
– Mary Oliver

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The Gift of Darkness

Just outside my window, the last red and gold leaves of the vine maple cling tenaciously to their individual perches. The brisk early winter wind swirls and teases each leaf inviting them to participate in this annual dance of release. There is a moment when the leaves seem to hesitate, almost as if they wonder what lies between them and the ground below. And then it happens. A sudden gust sends the leaves whirling and tumbling into the air and then back to the earth beneath. Here they rest and here they wait as a new cycle of change begins.

While there is a natural beauty to the many facets of nature's changes, for those who are grieving deeply, this can be a troubling time of year. The combination of darkness, cold and rain may tempt you to cuddle deeply in a favorite chair or bed and remain there. There may be a tendency to retreat from the outside world and the darkness that it holds. And sudden unexpected tears may make you wonder if you are truly okay.

I am reminded that each of the world's great spiritual traditions have always advocated a return to nature as a way of better understanding the individual paths we walk on a daily basis. The 'lilies of the field' have much to teach us if we only take the time to stop and consider them. And so I wonder what nature might teach us of the gifts that this season of darkness brings and how those gifts might help sustain us in our time of grief.

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The Gift of Darkness

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Much of nature hibernates without judgment. The fields lie fallow, the bear finds his den and the bare limbs of trees wait in anticipation for the new buds that will come when the winter cold diminishes. So often we try to live in our artificially lit homes and offices as though there is no change in seasons. Somehow, though, our hearts know the difference, especially when we are grieving.

Perhaps hiding for a time may actually be a healthy response. We may need to spend some time grieving in quiet without all the loud music and laughter jarring in our hearts and minds. Darkness can be restful and healing.

We also need to find some time to let our tears flow as they wish. Memories—good and bad—music and poetry may trigger something deep inside that causes us to cry. Instead of holding tears back, find a safe place and time to be sad.



So often we are told that we “should” or “ought” to feel this, or do that. Other times we become afraid of our feelings and that we might never be able to stop crying or cry in an inappropriate place. But our hearts often know more than our heads about what will help us through this difficult time. Here are some thoughts that might help you sort through how to handle your feelings:

- Find at least one person who you can trust to understand and not judge, and have them sit with you while you speak your heart. Quiet presence is not something everyone can do, but what a gift to find someone who can just be present!
- Find time to hibernate and be alone with yourself. Use your bereavement leave or even vacation time if you have to.
- Try not to judge yourself for needing extra quiet time. Remind yourself that you are grieving in a normal way.
- Find one or more of the books recommended in this or other newsletters or that have helped friends and set aside time for reading. If the book causes tears, remember that tears are healing.
- Try writing a journal, poetry or a song. It doesn't matter if it is good enough for others or not – it is for your own healing. Think about sharing your thoughts with others. You may be surprised to find that others have felt the same.

Try using the darkness and the winter for your own healing time – celebrate it instead of avoiding it. Use lessons that nature teaches about healthy responses to your grief.

– Debbie Hutton, Hospice Chaplain

Recommended Readings

“A New Normal: Learning to Live with Grief and Loss” by Darlene Cross, MS, MFT

“The Courage to Grieve: Creative Living, Recovery, & Growth through Grief” by Judy Tatelbaum

The Peace of Wild Things

– Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.



SoundCare Kids

Grief support for children, teens, and the adults who care for them.

The SoundCareKids Grief Support Groups give children, teens and their parents an opportunity to connect with others who have also experienced a loved one's serious illness or death while sharing feelings in creative, experiential ways and learning coping skills for adjusting to difficult changes. Group nights begin with pizza and play. Then kids, teens and caregivers meet in small groups (Littles 3 – 5, Bigs 6 – 8, Middles 9 – 12, Teens, and Adults) for discussion and activities.

Our regular support-group session topics include:

- Learning about grief and getting to know each other
- Exploring feelings and learning how to cope with them
- Sharing our stories
- Dealing with regret, guilt, and other unfinished business
- Identifying and adjusting to changes
- 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.

2013 Winter Grief Support Session

Thursdays, 6:15 to 7:45 p.m.
January 24 – February 28



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

The Power of Perspective



I have a dear friend who is blessed to be able to take her family on vacation to warm, sunny locations during the dark, wet months of our Pacific Northwest winters each year. She finds the incessant rain and lack of blue skies depressing, and if it were up to her, we would

bypass winter altogether. But that is not likely to happen any time soon; and despite her brief escapes from it, winter is always waiting for her here when she returns. Avoidance helps for a brief time, but eventually she has to figure out ways to cope with winter as it affects her daily life and that of her family.

Even when we are looking forward to a change, it is always difficult to some extent; so it is no surprise that we find it especially challenging to adjust to the repercussions of an unwelcome change such as a loved one's illness or death. We are filled with a sense of protest and longing to go back to "the way things used to be." Like my friend, many parents wish they could avoid the darkness and difficulty of grief themselves and prevent their children from having to experience it either. If they have the opportunity, parents work hard to create as many

positive memory-making experiences with their ill loved one as possible before the person dies. After a death, parents often try every support service available from counseling to support groups. There is a sense of urgency to the process that seems to indicate a hope that if the process is done "just right," everyone will be able to skate through the experience relatively unscathed.

But grief can't be avoided. Nor should it be—grief is a badge of honor, a testament to the significance of a cherished relationship in your child's life and to your child's ability to love and connect to others. With our natural inclination to see situations as either completely good or completely bad, we may not be able to see anything as positive when it comes to our loved one's death and it may anger us to even think of doing so. But as a parent, your perspective about your loved one's death and the resulting changes will help shape your child's understanding. Does the pain of a loved one's death indicate that it is unsafe to become attached to anyone else lest we lose them? Or can our grief serve as a reminder to treasure our relationships and to live our lives with integrity and intention? It is up to us to figure out how to cope with the difficult changes that are part of a loved one's death along with our many complicated thoughts and feelings about them. Although this is a lifelong journey that is different for each of us, your support can help your child navigate his or her own path, learning how to make sense of the incomprehensible and to make peace with the irreversible.

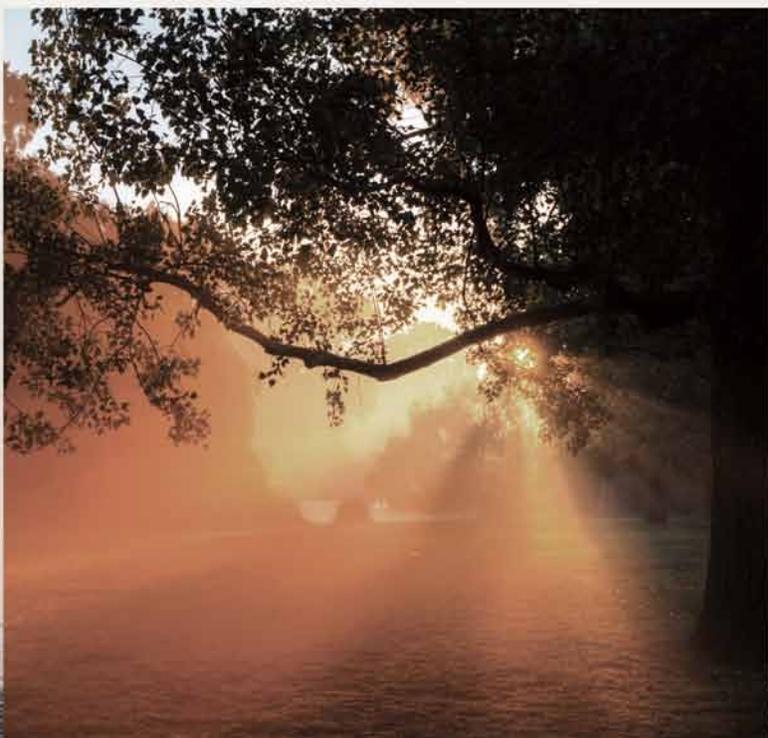
— Sharon Shadwell, SoundCareKids Coordinator

Recommended Readings

For children: *"The Fall of Freddie the Leaf"* by Leo Buscaglia

For teens: *"Help for the Hard Times: Getting Through Loss"* by Earl Hipp

For parents: *"The Loss That Is Forever: The Lifelong Impact of the Early Death of a Mother or Father"* by Maxine Harris



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

Providence SoundHomeCare and Hospice

3432 South Bay Road NE

Olympia, WA 98506

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!

Lost in the Woods: A Blessing

*When you are certainly lost,
when the wind blows acutely,
when the moon is unavailable,
when tragedy catches up
and walks,
like a companion, by your side,
when the snowflakes fall
severely;
then,*

*may you see a window and a pallid light,
may the light get bolder
as you get closer,
may the light be the sound
of vital laughing,
may the laugh be the laugh
of the ones you're missing,
may your feet find their way
to the oaken door,
may the door swing open, sure
and slow,
may each kind glad face
turn
to yours.*

– Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno