

THE NEXT STEP

A Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care Publication

Volume 1, Issue 3

August 2014

My Nana's Anger

Patricia Morris, Bereavement Coordinator (Stuart, VA)

This article is lovingly dedicated to my Nana, who died 13 years ago. August 2014 will mark the 100th anniversary of her birth.

The semester before I graduated from college, I had to do an internship at the University of Virginia's rehabilitation hospital — known then as Blue Ridge Hospital — in Charlottesville, Virginia. Fortunately, I was originally from Charlottesville and my grandparents still lived in town. I stayed with my grandparents during the

week while working at the hospital. My grandfather had been dealing with colon cancer and had gone through chemo treatments the year before. Unfortunately, his cancer could not be cured. During my stay with Nana and Papa, he gradually declined and had to go to a nursing home for the final six weeks of his life. He died on March 20, 1991.

I still had more than a month to go to finish my internship, so I continued to live with Nana during the week. Following the funeral and my parents' return to



their home in Florida, it was just me and Nana in the house.

Wow... My grandmother was the sweetest woman I had ever known — as most grandmas are! — until after Papa died. A couple of weeks after his death, Nana changed. She became an ill-

tempered woman who was very angry at Papa — angry that he died.

The one thing she kept talking about was that he never replaced their front door. Now, they had lived in their home for about 30 years and it was located near the UVA campus. The front door was hollow and made from wood veneer, as was the back door. Nana kept talking about how she could not believe he never replaced the front door with a more secure metal door. She would go on and on about the door and expressed

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What Being a Chaplain Taught Me about Grief

Justin Nelson, Chaplain (Mount Airy, NC)

Frederick Buechner, author, theologian and preacher, wrote, "When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will know me. It means that even after I die, you can still see my face and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart. For as long as you can remember me, I am

never entirely lost." These are words that I typically share in funerals and memorial services to help families and friends find comfort after losing a loved one.

Death is one of the major reasons we suffer grief and loss in this life. However, it is not the only reason we have these feelings. As a chaplain who has worked in hospitals, hospice, rehabilitation/skilled facilities, and retirement facilities, I have come in contact with many individuals experiencing loss and grief. It has been an honor to help facilitate the healing process

in order for an individual to find comfort and peace.

Along the way, I have learned a few things about how individuals experience grief, that I would like to share:

1. Grief is not about stages or following a pattern. No two people grieve the same way. Some show emotions, and others do not. If someone does not show emotions in public, that is okay and normal.
2. Do not assume that you know how someone is feeling because you have experienced grief. You do

not. I have heard it said, "Grief is like a fingerprint — unique and different."

3. Feelings of anger, guilt, and shame are all normal. Even being angry with God or whatever higher power one believes in is normal and perfectly acceptable. God is big enough to handle all of our anger, questions, and concerns.

4. Crying is wonderful. Crying is our body's way of releasing tension and stress. When stress and tension are not released, health problems occur.

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Chaplain cont.

5. As a society, we do not like to see people cry. When someone cries, our first instinct is to quickly get a Kleenex and give it to the person. Giving a Kleenex is a sign saying, "Please stop crying." Adults can cry for only 15-20 minutes before they have to stop. Adult bodies do not have the capacity to cry for hours like babies can. So, do not be afraid to cry, and do not be afraid to watch someone else cry.

6. Being vulnerable enough to share your thoughts and feelings with others truly does

help the healing process.

7. Well-meaning people can still say some hard, hurtful things — while trying to help. Many people cling to phrases like, "This is God's will," or, "God needed one more angel in Heaven."

More often than not, those phrases do not bring comfort. If you are grieving, you want your loved one with you, not in Heaven.

8. The loss of a person can be more complex than just losing that person. Roles and titles change. Husbands

and wives become widowers and widows, respectively. Living in a community becomes living alone. A caregiver loses their sense of vocation.

9. Grief and loss come in many forms other than death. We grieve getting older; losing independence; losing our driver's license. As a chaplain in a retirement home for a year, I saw more people grieving over selling their home and downsizing than anything else that year.

10. Creating rituals around

the loss helps bring closure and begin the healing process.

11. Holidays and special occasions can still bring up painful feelings, even if you thought you successfully worked through those feelings. This is normal!

12. Painful feelings of grief can arise when you least expect them. This, too, is normal!

13. Being a part of a community helps a person realize they are not alone in their grief.

14. As cliché as it might sound, time truly does help heal wounds.



GriefShare.org offers daily emails to help one through the grieving process.

"Grieving is not a short-term process; it's not even a long-term process; it's a lifelong process. 'Having a future' now means that although your life will flow again, it will flow differently as a

result of the loss. Your grief will become incorporated into your life history, become a part of your identity. And you will continue now, and forever, to redefine your

relationship with your deceased loved one. Death doesn't end the relationship, it simply forges a new type of relationship — one based not on physical presence but on memory, spirit, and love."

Ashley Bush,
Transcending Loss

Ask the Staff: How to "Go on Living" after a Death

Sandra Yates, Bereavement Coordinator (Mount Airy, NC)

Q: How do people go on with their lives after they have a loss, as if nothing has happened?

A: Sometimes people wear a "mask" and pretend that they are doing okay to the outside world, yet on the inside, they are hurting. They may feel that people expect them to go on as if nothing has happened. For instance, people will offer words like "Keep your chin up," "Just stay busy," and other various statements that encourage them to mask their feelings.

However, the reality is that it is okay to grieve openly for those we love — for in essence, "grief is the price we pay for love."

People will also encourage those who are grieving to get back to "their old selves." But in reality, they will never be able to go back to their "old self," for they have been forever changed by the experience of grief. For them to even *attempt* to go back to their "old self" could be harmful physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. They are a

"Everything in life is a journey which impacts us. We choose whether the experience will make us bitter or better."

different individual after they have been the primary caregiver for their loved one and walked the pathway of releasing their loved one.

Everything in life is a journey which impacts us. We choose whether the experience will make us bitter or better.

The expectation is that they are changed to be stronger, to know what it means to overcome life's obstacle of releasing their loved one back to the One who gave them the gift of their loved one.

Have a question for Mountain Valley Hospice? Contact us at mtnvalleyhospice.org/forms/contact, and we may feature it in an upcoming issue.

The Next Step newsletter and all other bereavement services are offered at no cost to the community, courtesy of Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care. If one would like to make a donation, please contact Sheila Jones at 336-789-2922, or visit mtnvalleyhospice.org/forms/donate.

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 Bruce Thomas, M. Ed

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276-694-4416
 Patricia Morris, BS, TRS

Bereavement Staff and Support Groups

Mount Airy
 2nd Tuesday of every month
 9:00 a.m. Good Mourning with Fonda
 Prime Sirloin

4th Tuesday of every month
 11:30 a.m. Fonda's Lunch Bunch
 Golden Corral

Elkin
 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month
 10:00 a.m. "Living with Grief"
 Matty's Restaurant

1st Monday of every month
 7:00 p.m. "Transitioning to the New"
 Fairfield Inn

4th Monday of every month
 7:00 p.m. Prime Time with Lisa
 (Loss of spouse in one's 30s, 40s, and 50s)
 Fairfield Inn

Stuart
 3rd Wednesday of every month
 1:30 p.m. Support with Patricia
 Stuart United Methodist Church

Wilkesboro
 1st and 3rd Monday of every month
 2:00 p.m. Listening with Lisa
 Rose Glen Village

Yadkinville
 1st Thursday of every month
 11:30 a.m. Sharing with Sarah
 Ace's Restaurant

Hillsville
 3rd Thursday of every month
 11:30 a.m. Moments with Bruce
 Hillsville Office

*Know someone who may benefit from hospice services? Recommend Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care.
 We treat every patient, every time, with the best possible care.*

My Nana's Anger cont.

anger toward Papa unlike I had ever heard from her. Every day, she talked about that door!

It was so hard to hear her anger for my grandfather, whom I loved. I knew she was grieving, but it was so hard to be a loving granddaughter. I could not wait for my internship to be over!

Finally, after a few weeks, her anger slowly subsided. She slowly became my loving Nana again. I knew she was 76 years old and had never

lived alone before in her life. I knew she was scared about living by herself full-time once my internship was over in May.

Witnessing her go through her grief and mourning for Papa, was a learning experience. I learned to just listen. I had no wisdom to share with Nana. She was thinking of herself and her safety, which was normal during her grief. I simply did a lot of listening. Hugs were often shared, too.

Grief touches us all in a different way. We can grieve differently for the different people in our lives who die.

Nana eventually became the sweet grandma I knew growing up. I enjoyed helping her as much as I could and spending as much time with her as possible, over the next 10 years that she lived. I know she missed Papa, but she was able to share memories about him, with love in her

eyes.

Just so you know, Nana lived in that house, by herself, for eight more years. She never did replace the front door!

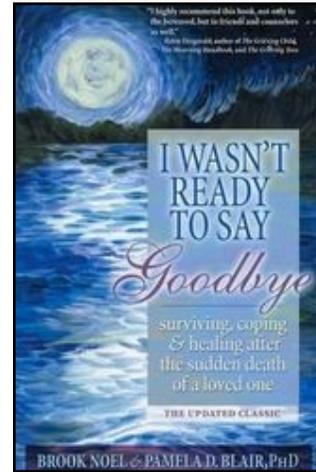
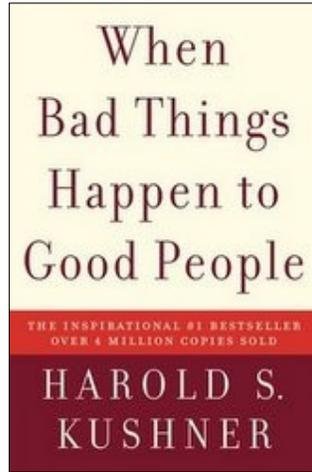
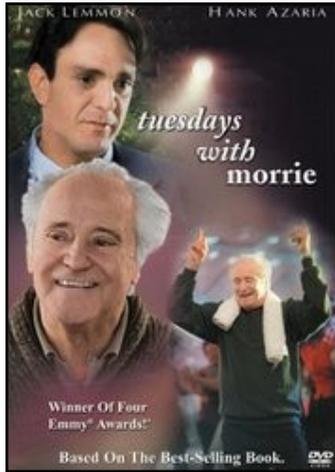
Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care Bereavement Services

Following a patient's death, Mountain Valley provides specialized grief support services to help loved ones cope with their loss. These services are provided as part of hospice care for routinely 13 months, at no cost to the recipient, and include:

- Grief counseling and education
- Face-to-face/phone sessions
- Monthly support groups
- Monthly newsletter

For questions and comments, contact Mountain Valley Hospice at 336-789-2922 or 888-789-2922, or mtnvalleyhospice.org.

Now available at the
Grief Resources section of the **Mount Airy Public Library**:



Books and videos may also be borrowed at any of the
Northwestern Regional libraries in Alleghany, Stokes, and Yadkin counties.

Return Service Requested

