

See the Good in Grief

Issue #029 • 09/01/2022



Good Grief!

Hello,

This month we are focusing not only on the grievers, but also the helpers. One of our favorite quotes is from our friend Mr. Rogers: “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’” How heartening to think about the difficult things in life this way, to know that there is always someone willing to help when things get tough.

This leads us to some exciting news – the helpers aren’t always people! We are proud to introduce you to Buddy. Buddy is a Bernedoodle who will be 4 months old in September. He’ll have a special job here at the Baptist Centers for Good Grief (once he’s passed his therapy dog exams): he’s going to be a greeter at The Cottage and a supporter of our grieving teens and children at various group events. Buddy will live with Angela, and he will come to work too! Why is his name Buddy? At Camp Good Grief, our trained volunteers are called Buddies. Buddies are very important, and they have provided great care and fun to our grieving children for over 24 years. We’ve learned everyone needs a good buddy sometimes.



Pet therapy has been an important part of our services through Mid-South Therapy Dogs since 2004. The Baptist Centers for Good Grief recognize that for some people, the unconditional love and support of a pet can help heal the heart and calm the mind. Pets are some of the best listeners – they don’t have an agenda and they don’t (usually) talk back. Look for our Buddy and yours in Winter 2023!

Sincerely,

Angela Hamblen Kelly, LCSW
Administrator

& Lauren Strini, LPC/MHSP
Clinical Director

Helping Someone Who Is Grieving

Many responses that people receive to their grief and bereavement are unhelpful and a reflection of the discomfort of the non-griever. Death, loss, and grief are topics that generally make people uncomfortable. However, this does not negate the need of the grieving person to express their grief and share their pain. Be aware, as a helper, that there is no quick and easy fix for this. It is a journey that the griever must take. However, the support that they receive along the journey can make a big difference.

What are some things that can be done? One of the best and simplest things that can help a grieving person is caring presence. Be there, present with them in the moment. Let them know that you are there to listen, to mourn with them, and to be a witness to their stories of love and loss. You might not have exactly the right words, and you are allowed to tell the griever that. “I’m not sure what to say here – just know I care about you and I am here if you want to talk to me about things. I will listen”. Often, in early bereavement, griever don’t really remember the nice things that people said to them. Rather, they remember who was there for them.

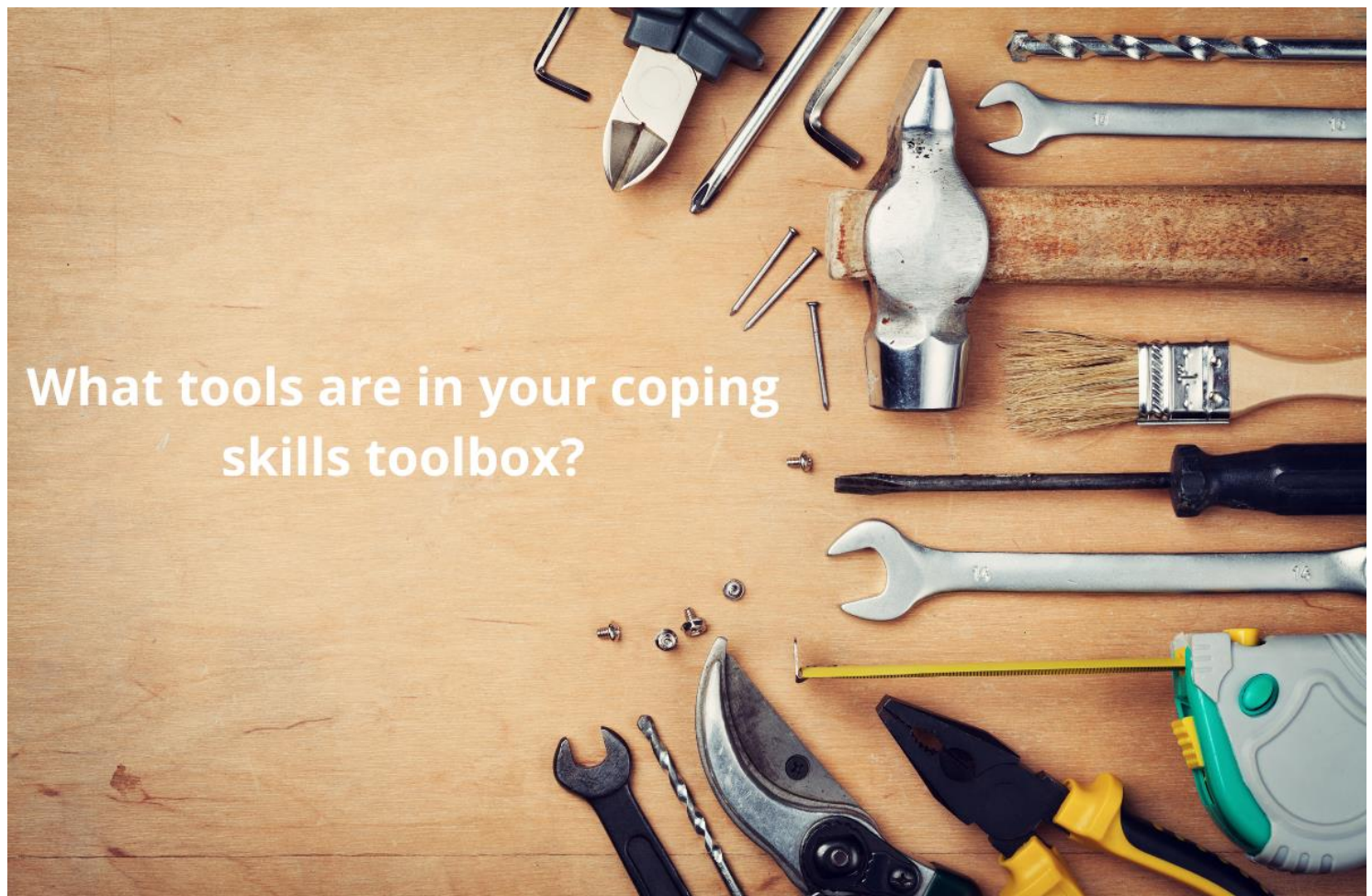
Another consideration for those trying to help the griever is timing. Each griever is unique and so no assumptions about functioning can be made. We do know that often support is at its highest right after a loss. As people return to their “normal lives,” the griever can start to feel isolated and think that their previous supports are “tired” of their grief. This can be true or simply a faulty perception. Grievers need on-going support, and you can be the person that follows them through. Ask how they are coping during their second (or more) year of bereavement, and be prepared to listen without judgement to whatever answer is given.



Coping Skills Toolbox Series – Respond Rather Than React

At the Baptist Centers for Good Grief, we often talk with our griever about how our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are all connected to one another. Here, we want to look at reactivity as a response to an intense emotion. For example, someone says “Are you still having trouble with missing your dead sister? I thought you’d be over it by now.” Your initial emotional reaction might be anger, followed by the thought “no one understands me,” followed by the behavior of yelling at the (uninformed) person who said that awful thing.

A useful coping skill in these instances is to practice mindful response. You can practice this at any and every step. The goal here is to create some space between initial feeling and response. Your emotional reaction may still be anger, but allow yourself to observe that before responding. Note to yourself, “I am feeling angry and stressed right now. I need to take some deep breaths before formulating a response rather than reacting to the stressor”. Do this for yourself in order to keep your own stress levels lower and avoid engaging with people who are not supportive of you. (See also the Next Step)



Be the Good in Grief

We are grateful for every single dollar donated to support our Baptist Centers for Good Grief, and we are especially honored to receive gifts in memory of loved ones whom you or others have lost. We often receive memorial gifts after counseling sessions and on birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays throughout the year. Sometimes we receive gifts in lieu of sending flowers to a visitation or funeral.

When you remember a loved one by supporting the work we do, you are giving others an incredible gift too. We call this paying it forward.

We hope you might want to pay it forward to help someone else on their grief journey. Be the good in grief today: scan the QR code, visit <https://baptistgriefcenters.org/give/>, or call 901-227-7123 to make a gift!

As always, you can like, comment, and share our messages on social media. Follow along on Facebook at *Baptist Centers for Good Grief – Kemmons Wilson Family Ctr & Milla’s House* and *NEA Baptist Center for Good Grief*.



Podcast & YouTube Channel

Tune in to our podcast, *Grief is... Real. Big. Better shared.* There you will hear brave people sharing their grief in order to work toward healing and to support one another. You can find our podcast wherever you get your podcasts. We also have a YouTube channel, *Baptist Centers for Good Grief*. Here you can find a variety of “Coping Skills Toolbox” segments, which offer practical tips for coping with grief.

Don’t forget to follow us on Facebook for the latest news, updates, and education about grief, mourning, and coping. Please like and share our posts so that others can find support in their grief.



.....

Dates to Remember: Grief Support Groups

Adult Grief Groups

Monthly Groups

Screening and registration required:

TN/MS call 901-861-5656

AR/MO call 870-936-7719



- **Alcohol or Drug Related Death Support Group**– monthly virtual support group
September 13 & October 11 from 5:00 – 6:30pm
- **Homicide Grief Support Group**– monthly virtual support group - September 20 &
October 18 from 5:00 – 6:30pm
- **Suicide Loss Support Group**– monthly virtual support group
September 15 & October 20 from 4:00 – 5:30pm

Series Groups

- **6-week Grief Group**- weekly virtual group for grieving adults – September 12, 19, 26,
October 3, 10 & 17 from 12:00-1:30pm
- **Walking with Your Grief**

An in-person walking grief group for adults will begin in September at our Collierville location. Grief manifests itself in many ways, and we are often left wondering how to cope with it all. This easy-paced walking group offers participants an opportunity to express their grief through movement alongside others while connecting to the present moment through mindful walking. This six-session series is not an exercise group, but rather an alternative to more traditional grief support groups for people who would benefit from expressing their grief in different ways.

September 9, 16, 23, 30, October 7 & 14 from 10:30-12:00pm.

Dates to Remember: Kaleidoscope Series

Educational and supportive virtual grief seminars provided by grief counselors for grieving adults.

September: Journaling & Grief – September 29 from 5:30-7:00pm

October: Parenting While Grieving – October 27 from 12:00 – 1:30pm

KALEIDOSCOPE SERIES



GRIEF SUPPORT SEMINARS

Registration required:

TN/MS call 901-861-5656

AR/MO call 870-936-7719

Take Five!

Here are five resources to help you along your journey:

1. *Understanding Your Grief: 10 Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing your Heart* – Alan Wolfelt, PhD
2. “How to Help a Grieving Child” – The Dougy Center -
<https://www.dougy.org/resource-articles/how-to-help-a-grieving-child-1>
3. “How to Help a Loved One through Sudden Loss” – *The New York Times*-
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/07/well/live/sudden-death-loss.html>
4. “Grievers Helping Grievers: A Few Considerations” –
<https://whatsyourgrief.com/grievers-helping-grievers/>
5. “Respond, Don’t React: Taming Stress through Mindful Presence” -
<https://mindowl.org/respond-dont-react/>





The Next Step

The Next Step – Reflection

Think about some of the unhelpful things that people have said to you during your grief journey. Maybe you responded, maybe you reacted, or maybe you did nothing. Take a moment to respond now in the absence of the stress of the moment. For example, let's suppose someone said to you, "Why can't you just be happy, your husband is in heaven now?" Maybe you do feel happy about this aspect of things but think that it oversimplifies grief and may not have been what was needed in the moment. Maybe a mindful response would have been something like, "That aspect of what has happened here does make me feel happy sometimes. But, like any other major life change, it's not that simple. I am here now in the absence of my partner of the last x number of years. I have to try to figure out everything on my own, and that creates a lot of on-going challenges for me." If you don't feel like providing that much information (or education to the uninformed) you can also simply say, "I can understand why you might wonder that" and leave it alone. Everyone has their own examples (usually more than one). Practice with your own.



CENTERS FOR
GOOD GRIEF

baptistgriefcenters.org

**KEMMONS WILSON FAMILY
CENTER FOR GOOD GRIEF**
1520 W. Poplar Ave.
Collierville, TN 38017

MILLA'S HOUSE
326 Ellsworth
Memphis, TN 38111

**NEA BAPTIST
CENTER FOR GOOD GRIEF**
1717 Executive Square
Jonesboro, AR 72401