

See the Good in Grief

ISSUE #040 AUGUST 2023



Good Grief!

We hope that you all were able to read the recent article featured in the Daily Memphian, "Therapy Dog Nuzzles His Way Into Baptist Grief Support." It's about our very own Buddy! In this issue of our newsletter, we will address grief surrounding pet loss as well as the potential role of animals in bereavement and support system cultivation.

Don't worry if you aren't "an animal person." Not everyone is, and that is all right. If this is the case, you might just consider the topic as educational - maybe it will help you understand people and their relationships with animals a bit better. Did you know that 84% of people have a pet for companionship (APPS, 2022; ASPCS, 2022)? That is a huge number and indicates that animals have a significant impact on the lives of our families and the lives of our grievers. We dedicate this month to our furry (and sometimes not so furry) friends.

Also, don't forget to tune in to our podcast "Grief Is... Real. BIG. Better shared." There you will find discussions about various aspects of grief and the grieving experience. We are pleased to share with you our experiences in doing this work as well as the real experiences of grievers in their own words.

Sincerely,

Angela Hamblen Kelly, LCSW
Administrator

&

Lauren Strini, LPC/MHSP
Clinical Director



Grief and Animals

We approach the topic of grief and animals from several different angles. First, we examine the topic of whether or not animals grieve and what that can potentially look like. Then, we explore the grief that loved ones have surrounding the loss of a beloved pet. Finally, we look at the various ways in which animals can provide support to the bereaved. Remember, you do not have to be an animal lover to get useful information from this article. Potentially, this article could help you understand a perspective that can feel difficult to understand.

Do animals grieve? This is a question that many bereaved people who have living pets might have some thoughts about. We've heard stories of cats refusing to eat after a loved one died, dogs waiting by the door, pets sleeping on the deceased's clothing or shoes. It is evident that our animals experience connection with us. Their behavior changes with bereavement just as human behavior changes with bereavement. Usually, with time and adaptation, it finds equilibrium again.

How do we grieve when a beloved pet dies?

We often view pets as a member of the family, so it does feel as if there is a piece missing when a beloved pet dies. In addition, sometimes there is the complicating factor of making the decision that the pet needs to be euthanized. This has its own emotional complications: Was it right? Was it the appropriate time? Did the pet know what was happening? Pets love quite unconditionally, and so there is a void after their death. Allow yourself to experience what you feel and to mourn the loss. Most people find that reconciliation happens somewhat naturally when they give themselves this space to grieve the loss of their pet.

And so, a word about comparison between pet and human loss before we move forward. We've often spoken about how comparing and contrasting types of human losses is an exercise in uselessness – the loss of a child is devastating, the loss of a spouse is devastating, the loss of a parent is devastating. Loss is devastating to the bereaved. Similarly, it does not do to compare the loss of a pet to the loss of a person – they are two different creatures and do not compare. Therefore, if your dog dies, it does not mean you understand what it is to lose a child. A dog is not a child and a child is not a dog. These are two entirely different experiences of bereavement and should be treated as such. Tread lightly and carefully, remembering that bereaved have special needs and extra care is warranted.

What about animals as supports for the bereaved? Animals can be excellent supports because of the unconditional love that they provide. The bereaved can talk to an animal and expect no response except for a cuddle, a sigh, or a purr. Sometimes that is simply the response that a grieving person needs - a little warmth and connection. A grieving widow once shared that during the first year of her bereavement, her cat slept on her pillow. Prior to the death of her spouse, that cat had its own pillow on the floor and never ventured onto the bed. It is not just cats and dogs – we have worked with bereaved over the years who have gleaned comfort from parrots, turtles, horses, ducks, and snakes. Animals can sense our need for connection. And that is what our friend and therapy dog Buddy does. He is trained to sense whether or not someone needs him. If so, he offers comfort, if not he moves on. What a blessing to have such creatures that care enough to sit with us in our pain.



Dates to Remember

Arkansas:

6 Week Spouse Loss Grief Support Group - In-person

August 18, 25, September 1, 8, 15 & 22
from 10:30-11:30am

Registration required.
AR/MO call 870-936-7719



Tennessee:

6 Week Grief Group for Adults - In-person Collierville

August 14, 21, 28, September 11, 18 & 25 from 4:00-5:00pm

6 Week Spouse Loss Grief Support Group - In-person Collierville

August 17, 24, 31, September 7, 14 & 21 from 10:30-11:30am

Walking With Your Grief - In-person Collierville

Join us for a time to walk, reflect, and share.

Fridays: April 28, May 5, 12, 19 & 26 from 10:30-12:00pm.

Registration required.
TN/MS call 901-861-5656



Call us at
901-861-5656 for more
information on upcoming
groups and camps for
children and teens.

Grief Expectations Versus Reality

If you were to stop the average person on the street and ask them about the grief process, aside from the fact that they'd likely be pretty surprised, they would probably regurgitate some pretty predictable generalizations: It lasts a few months, and there's some steps that you need to get through to finish it.

Actually, grief tends to last longer and follow a less organized course than what people may think. Contrary to popular belief, grief isn't done after a few weeks, a month, three months, a year. It is a profound life change. So how long does it last? In a sense, it lasts a lifetime. That doesn't mean that the anguish and distress that come with early bereavement last forever. It just means that once you are fundamentally changed by a death, you don't just forget or "move on." Instead, you take the time needed, learn to cope with a very different-looking life, and carry the love that remains for your loved one into this "new normal."

But what about the steps? Everyone knows about the steps, right? Something about anger, depression, acceptance? Ask any bereaved person and they'll tell you – you can experience all of those things in one day, sometimes in 15 minutes. Then, you can experience them all again. Some people come into the Center and ask what's wrong with them because they don't feel angry. It turns out that there is nothing wrong with them. Not all grievers feel the same things, and they certainly don't feel them in any sort of predictable order. Instead, the process is a roller coaster, a spiral within a spiral, an ocean in all kinds of weather. If there were a true pattern, this would be easier. Instead, the griever is forced to muster all the coping skills they can in order to endure both the predictable and the unpredictable waves of grief.

KALEIDOSCOPE SERIES



GRIEF SUPPORT SEMINARS

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

Hybrid - Dorothy's Cottage or virtual:

Learning to Communicate While Grieving

August 28 from 4:00-5:30pm

Finding a New Normal
September 25 from 4:00-5:30pm

Registration required.
TN/MS call 901-861-5656
AR/MO call 870-936-7719

Be the Good in Grief

Painting with a Purpose benefiting Milla's House

Join us on August 3 from 7-9 pm at Painting with a Twist in Germantown! Half of all proceeds will go back to Milla's House. Scan the QR below to register!



Share the Love 5k and Family Festival will be on October 14, 2023!

This event is held in memory of Collins Leach, who loved to share the love.

Registration link coming soon!

A packet pickup night will be held at the Ready Room in East Memphis—thank you to Hook Point Brewery for allowing us to use the space!

Festivities will begin at 8 am on Saturday with the 5k starting at 9 am and the fun run starting at 9:15 am. Join us for bounce houses, the 901 Goats, and lots more fun! Food trucks will be on site if you would like to purchase food.



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.

Be the good in grief today: scan the QR code, visit

<https://baptistgriefcenters.org/give/>, or call 901-227-7123 to make a gift!

Be the Good in Grief

As the back-to-school season approaches, it is important to remember that for many young individuals, the start of a new academic year can coincide with the weight of grief they carry in their hearts. The Teen Grief Group at the Centers for Good Grief provides a safe and nurturing space for these young souls to navigate their grief journey while connecting with peers who understand their experiences.

We invite you to make a lasting impact by partnering with your friends and family to sponsor a Teen Grief Group night. By contributing \$500, you can ensure that these brave individuals receive the vital support and counseling they need during this crucial time in their lives.

Together, we can empower these resilient students to face their grief head-on, cultivate resilience, and build a brighter future. With your support, we can make a difference in the lives of these young individuals who are bravely navigating the path of healing.

To sponsor a Teen Grief Group night or make a gift of any size, please scan the QR code below or visit baptistgriefcenters.org/give/. We sincerely appreciate your compassion and commitment to fostering a community of support for grieving teens.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUPPORT OUR GRIEVING TEENS?

By contributing \$500, you can ensure that these teens receive a safe space for healing.

Our Teen Grief Support Group meets
monthly.



New Podcast



New Podcast

Grief is... Real. BIG. Better shared. BAPTIST CENTERS FOR GOOD GRIEF

EPISODE 19 GRIEF: AN ENDING, BUT ALSO A BEGINNING

Available wherever you get your podcast.

PODCAST NEW EPISODE

AVAILABLE WHEREVER YOU GET YOUR PODCAST



Episode #20 Grief & Your Body

Grief is... Real. BIG. Better shared. BAPTIST CENTERS FOR GOOD GRIEF



NEW EPISODE

AVAILABLE WHEREVER YOU GET YOUR PODCAST



EPISODE #21 GRIEF & SPIRITUALITY

1:49 4:10



Baptist Centers for Good Grief

Ways to connect to our resources



Our website - www.baptistgriefcenters.org Here you will find a helpful FAQ section, and so much more.



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.



Follow us on Facebook at Baptist Centers for Good Grief - Kemmons Wilson Family Ctr & Milla's House and NEA Baptist Center for Good Grief.



Follow us on Instagram @centersforgoodgrief and @neabaptist_centerforgoodgrief

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MILLA'S HOUSE 326 Ellsworth Memphis, TN 38111

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