



FAITH & HOPE HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE

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# Epilogue

Bereavement Newsletter

July/August 2019

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## Gratitude Journaling

Gratitude journaling is a technique that brings focus on to the positive things in life. It's a mindful practice, brings a strengths-perspective. In her book, *Gratitude Heals*, author Linda Roszak Burton states that gratitude is "... more than a thankful feeling. It is a profound appreciation of what is good in our lives." Much of grief is sad and focuses on loss. Gratitude moves the focus back onto the positives that life still has. This doesn't have to be a Pollyanna process, trying to be all bubbles and smiles. But it takes an active approach to shift focus from the sad/depressive side of grief to more positive aspects, like remembering funny stories, enjoyable trips, special memories of the deceased. (Continued on page 5)

## Book Recommendation

### Mindfulness & Grief: With guided meditations to calm your mind and restore your spirit By Heather Stang

Coping with grief and loss is one of life's greatest challenges, and it can be hard to know how to reduce the suffering it brings. *Mindfulness & Grief* is your self-care toolkit, designed to help you cope with everything from sleepless nights to anxiety-filled days, while boosting your body's natural resilience against stress through grief and beyond.

Combining inspirational stories of hope and healing with contemporary grief research, evidence-based meditation techniques, and the knowledge that each of us grieves in our own way, *Mindfulness & Grief* has helped thousands of people worldwide navigate the disorienting path of loss. There are over 35 meditation, yoga, journaling, and expressive arts exercises. They are designed to help you ease your physical symptoms of grief, calm your mind, and regulate difficult emotions.

(Summary from Google Books)

Published 2018; ISBN: 1782496734

## A Note From Your Bereavement Services Coordinator

In this edition of *Epilogue*, we will take a close look at disenfranchised grief and gratitude journaling, as well as guided imagery. I've included lots of resources for all of these to get you started.

I started to push off the discussion on gratitude until November in observance of Thanksgiving Day. While, that is a great time to consider the things that we are grateful to have in our lives, gratitude doesn't have to wait for a once-a-year holiday. Expressing gratitude and gratitude journaling are important year round, and they come with some impressive benefits, as you'll soon see. I'd like to note that neither I nor Faith & Hope Hospice & Palliative Care get any monetary gain from these resources. They are provided as a way to help readers try the skills and techniques discussed in the newsletter. I make every effort to screen the resources to provide you with quality materials. I encourage you to call us if you find any issues with a recommended resource or if you need help finding something that works better for you. My goal is to support you through your grief journey. I wish you all the best.



Reid Jacobs, APHSW-C, MSW  
Bereavement Services Coordinator



“In the thickness of shock, I didn't realize that the rest of my life would be measured in before and after. Before, when my family was intact. After, when I would somehow learn to live without the person I was supposed to get a lifetime with.”

-Lynn Shattuck, on the death of her sibling; read the full essay at  
[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/loss-sibling\\_b\\_4843824](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/loss-sibling_b_4843824)

### Benefits of Practicing Gratitude

- Learn more about yourself
- Gain a fresh perspective
- Improve mood as well as improved physical and mental health
- Feel more connected with others
- Cope with adversity
- Increased sense of purpose
- Store positive energy, gain clarity, greater control over thoughts and emotions
- Neutralize envy, irritation, and worry
- Better sleep, improved relationships, increased resolve to achieve goals
- Lower levels of stress hormones and increased beneficial hormones.
- Strengthen relationships
- Increase well-being & life satisfaction
- Increase compassion, kindness, resilience, empathy, and energy

## Mindfulness & Guided Imagery

I have mentioned mindfulness a lot in the previous Epilogue newsletters, but it keeps coming up because it's such a great tool to help people cope with grief and stresses of all types. However, I have not explained what I mean by "mindfulness." The best description that I've found is from the founder of Health Journeys, Belleruth Naparstek, who produces recorded meditations and guided imagery sessions. She describes mindfulness as, "the practice of noticing and focusing, in a detached but curious way, on moment-to-moment awareness of our physical, emotional, and mental sensations and perceptions without trying to change them in any way." Mindfulness works because knowing what's going on within and around us, we are better able to deal with it. It can also give a sense of power over your circumstances.

The practice of mindfulness can take many forms, both active and passive in nature. The easiest way to start is to use guided imagery. This can be done with a therapist or through audio and video recordings. There are many free resources online, but the quality

varies. Below I'll list some free and paid resource that come from sources I trust.

A more active approach to mindfulness is through meditation. This process requires the individual to focus on their own state of being, their breathing, emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations. Generally, the goal is to keep the mind focused on one specific thing, like breathing or on a word or idea, like "peace" or "I am enough." Sometimes these are referred to as mantras. The mind tends to wander, so the goal is to bring the focus back onto the mantra or breathing.

Mindfulness is not necessarily religious or spiritual in nature, but some people do choose to incorporate their faith into their practice. The could be done by focusing on a scripture or having a short prayer, like "God be with me," for example.

Our brains naturally bounce with new ideas. In the gentle process of refocusing, we are able to center ourselves. The repetitive nature of the mantra also helps instill and manifest it within us. That's where the benefits really start to develop.

## Guided Imagery Resources

- Health Journeys– offers a great assortment of resources for meditation and guided imagery, and a blog on these topics. [www.healthjourneys.com](http://www.healthjourneys.com)
- PTHWRK– established by Daniel Ahearn (a Faith & Hope volunteer) teaches mindfulness and has some free guided meditations that you can access from their website [www.pthwrk.com](http://www.pthwrk.com)
- Mindfulness Meditation: Nine Guided Practices to Awaken Presence and Open Your Heart, by Tara Brach.
- Guided Mindfulness Meditation Series 1, by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Practicing Mindfulness: An Introduction to Meditation, from The Great Courses

## Recipes from the Heart

This soup has been one of my favorite dishes my entire life. In fact, Mom started craving it when she was pregnant with me. It's always been my go-to comfort food, and Mom makes it when I need a pick-me up. Out of everything this soup means, it's just that my mother may not always have the perfect words to make me feel better but knowing she took her time to try, means the world.

Once, when my son was in the ICU, mom made a batch and brought the soup (including the pot) to the hospital. Because of the distance (LA to San Diego) my mother couldn't visit my son in the hospital every day, but this was her way of giving me some comfort. Plus it was nice to have the smell of a home cooked meal in such a cold sterile environment.

-Alejandra Brown, Care Coordinator Assistant

### Albondigas Soup

#### Ingredients

##### Meatballs

1lb Ground Chicken  
2 Tbsp Mint (finely diced)  
2 Tbsp Onion (finely diced)  
1 Roma Tomato (finely diced)  
3 Tbsp Rice  
1 Egg  
¼ tsp Cumin  
Salt to taste

##### Soup

½ Onion (sliced into rings)  
2 Garlic Cloves (finely diced)  
4 Roma Tomatoes (quarter)  
2 Tbsp Oil  
2 cartons (64 oz) Chicken Broth  
½ tsp Cumin  
Optional: potatoes, carrots, zucchini, all chopped large

1. Meatballs: Combine all ingredients thoroughly. Form into meatballs, about golf ball size or slightly larger. Set aside.
2. Stir-fry onion in oil over medium-low heat, 2-3 min. Add garlic and cook for 1 min. Add tomatoes and cumin. Stir over heat until it becomes a salsa-like mixture. Add chicken broth and bring to boil. Add the meatballs, reduce heat and simmer for 25-30 min.

### Beyond the Journal

Here are some non-conventional ways to have a practice of gratitude for those of us who don't like to write or keep a journal.

- Take photos of the things that you are grateful for. Keep these in a special folder on your smart phone or computer so you can easily return to them.
- Make a gratitude scrapbook with your own pictures, clippings from a magazine or off the internet. You can incorporate writings in this too and involve family & friends.

- Write short gratitudes on small slips of paper and store them in a clear jar. Seeing a full jar can trigger positive feelings, and you can pull out one or two to help on bad days.
- Write gratitudes on sticky-notes and hide them throughout your home or office. These can make for great surprise reminders. My mom likes to stick these in books on my bookcase. It might take a year before I find them, but they are always great surprises.

The throws of grief can rob us of joy. Keeping a gratitude journal lets you take back some control over this.

There are a number of ways to keep gratitude journal. Trying a few until you find a style that works best for you. One option is to keep a running list of things you are grateful for. You might also try keeping a notebook specifically listing gratitude. Some people choose to list three things everyday before bed or first thing in the mornings, before starting the day.

### Types of Gratitude Journals

Gratitude journals can take many forms. The simplest is a blank notebook that the writer uses as they wish, listing out things they are grateful for either bullet point or in a narrative format. These can be used multiple times a day, once a day, once a week, or just sporadically to document especially meaningful gratitudes.

Other journals bring a bit more structure. The most basic of these includes the day's date and the prompt, "Today I am Grateful For: 1, 2, 3." Another format gives a prompt to make a list on a particular topic. For example, "What are ten memorable events that you are most grateful for?"

Another type of structure gives a theme for a weekly focus and different prompts for each day that week. Still others will give an inspirational quote or scripture to prompt your writing.

There is such a variety because there's really no "right way" to do this. What works best for each individual is

unique. That being said, there are some tips for getting the most out of your gratitude journaling. Place a sticky note somewhere prominent to remind you to journal or set a reminder on your smart phone. Schedule a specific time to do your journaling and stick to that. Don't just write *what* you are grateful for. Write *why* you are grateful for them too. This will help you fully appreciate them and get the most benefit from your journaling practice. Remember that it is the sustained practice that will give you the most benefit from gratitude journaling.

### Gratitude Journal Resource List

There are a lot of great resources for gratitude journals, but my top pick is by Linda Roszak Burton. She provides detailed info about journaling, why and how it works. Her book takes an evidence-based approach and explains it in easy-to-understand language. She also gives some great writing prompts with plenty of room to write. The other two books are also great resources. You can explore them and many others online to find one that suites you.

- Gratitude Heals: A Journal for Inspiration and Guidance, by Linda Roszak Burton; ISBN-10: 0578481529
- The 90-Day Gratitude Journal: A Mindful Practice for a Lifetime of Happiness, by S.J. Scott & Barrie Davenport; ISBN-10: 1946159158
- Start with Gratitude: Daily Gratitude Journal by Happy Books Hub; ISBN-10: 1726280594

*The Bereavement Newsletter is free resource made available for 12 months to the family and friends our hospice patients, and to the community at large.*

*If you would prefer to no longer receive this newsletter or if you would like to receive it beyond 12 months, please contact us at 818-559-1460 to update your preferences.*



## Grief Explored: Disenfranchised Grief

People almost universally recognize that the death of a parent, child, or spouse will trigger feelings of sadness, longing and grief. Even if they don't know how to respond or what to say, they understand that it is a profound loss. However, the types of loss that people experience goes far beyond these common categories, and this can complicate how people respond. Sometimes, others don't know how to respond, but they may not even recognize that there was a loss to be grieved. Any loss that is not generally recognized is considered "disenfranchised grief."

These losses are diverse and might seem obvious to some people, but not recognized by others. For example, a person may grieve when a divorced spouse dies. Sure, they are no longer married, and the divorce signals that there was severe strain or break in the relationship, but that that doesn't sever all connections and emotional attachments to the ex. There can be a complex series of reactions beyond even what the bereaved expected. The death can be a reminder of one's own mortality. It adds an ultimate level of finality to the relationship, forever ending any hope of rekindling the relationship that they once had. If children are involved, it can be difficult to see them grieve the death of the other parent, regardless the relationship between the divorced couple.

People need the support of family, friends, and community to cope with a major loss. Bereavement can impact all aspects of life. Losing that support can complicate the grieving process, causing it to last longer and be more severe than it might otherwise. The acute stress can be compounded, decreasing the person's

quality of life, make them less productive, and increase their sense of suffering. It can also put someone at a higher risk of unhealthy coping, like self-medicating with alcohol and drugs. It can even increase the risk of suicide.

### Why should we care?

People need the support of family, friends, and community to cope with a major loss. Bereavement can impact all aspects of life. Losing that support can complicate the grieving process, causing it to last longer and be more severe than it might otherwise. The acute stress can be compounded, decreasing the person's quality of life, make them less productive, and increase their sense of suffering. It can also put someone at a higher risk of unhealthy coping, like self-medicating with alcohol and drugs. It can even increase the risk of suicide.

### What can you do?

The first and easiest step is to be aware of disenfranchised grief and be more aware of the losses people you care about might be experiencing. Ask them if they're grieving or how they are coping when they've experienced a loss. Also, know that it's okay to ask for support from family and friends after you experiences a loss that they may not recognize. It may seem obvious to you, but if you aren't getting the support you need, let them know. They may not be aware of how you are feeling. Also, let yourself feel whatever emotions you are feeling without judging yourself. We might even be surprised by our own grief responses. That's okay and a normal part of the human experience.

Also, make sure you get the help you need. See or talk to a grief counselor, see a therapist, seek out a support group or read up on the topic.

## Types of Disenfranchised Grief

Disenfranchised grief comes in all forms. Types of losses at high risk for disenfranchisement include:

- Relationships: formers spouses or lovers, same-sex relationships, co-workers, affair, drinking buddy
- Under-recognized: miscarriage, siblings
- Stigmatized losses: suicide, drug overdose, drunk driving
- Non-death losses: job, religious conversion, anticipated hereditary illness, financial loss

## Movie Recommendation

### **Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close**

(2011) PG-13 | 2h 9min

*Adventure, Drama, Mystery*

Starring: Thomas Horn, Tom Hanks, and Sandra Bullock

Based on a book by the same title, this story is about a boy, Oskar, whose father died in the Twin Towers during the 9/11 attacks. We see how Oskar copes with the death and how he responds to life without his father. His response is marked by the behavioral disturbances that can develop after a child experiences a traumatic event, as well

as life-long effects that these can cause.

The story unfolds a year later after Oskar finds a mysterious key in his father's belongings. This provokes him to go on a scavenger hunt across New York City, continuing the bond with his father as they had gone on numerous scavenger hunts before he died. This forces Oskar to engage with others, face his fears, and grow.

Through the his interactions with his mom and grandmother, the audience witnesses how intergenerational support can affects a child's grieving process.

## The Life That I Have

by Leo Marks

The life that I have  
Is all that I have,  
And the life that I have is yours.  
The love that I have  
Of the life that I have,  
Is yours and yours and yours.  
  
A sleep I shall have,  
A rest I shall have,  
Yet death will be but a pause.  
For the peace of my years  
In the long green grass,  
Will be yours and yours and yours.

## Bereavement Services Available

In addition to this Bereavement Newsletter and our periodic mailings, Faith & Hope Hospice can also provide:

- Resources via email
- Workshops
- Support groups (*coming soon*)
- Phone-based support
- In-person counseling for individuals and families

Contact Reid at **818-559-1460** or email him at [reid@faithandhopehospice.com](mailto:reid@faithandhopehospice.com) to request these additional services.



# FAITH & HOPE HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE

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Faith and Hope Hospice & Palliative Care is a family-owned company based in Pasadena, CA. We are a member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and accredited by The Joint Commission.

Faith & Hope was established in 2007 primarily due to personal experiences the founders had. Meeting our patient's psychosocial needs is our priority. We provide comfort care wherever our patients live by using a holistic approach toward their illnesses. We also recognize that tending to the family's emotional needs is as crucial as the patient's needs.



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