

# Center Highlights



## *From the Executive Director-*

There are two ways of spreading light - to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

*-Edith Wharton*

People faced with darkness in loss search for light, hope, and strength. We look for ways to restore balance in uncertain and vulnerable times. For those seeking refuge at the Center for Loss and Bereavement, that quest has become one of focused energy and, at times, critical need.

Across our programs, we have an incredibly strong team of empathic, skillful professionals who strive to keep our services relevant and impactful to the grieving community. We stay current in the field and follow trends in society. We take great consideration in our approach to grief counseling and group supports, and in choosing salient topics for professional trainings. Most importantly, we routinely assess feedback from those we serve. Through these collective sources of guidance, we determine developmental needs of our diversified and creative programming.

As the Center's reputation has grown and our services increased in response, we are excited to announce that recently we have brought on four exceptional people to round out our staff. Erin Eagles and Shelley Robbins are working with our counseling, education, and support programs, while Donna Piergallini and Jamie Lockwood are managing development and administrative goals. Each has joined us with enthusiastic commitment to our mission's work and is honored to help spread the Center's light to a greater number of people. We are thrilled to have them!

All of us at the Center are continually grateful for the unyielding dedication of our volunteers and generous donors. The light coming from your giving is essential in shining hope through each of us, and in turn on those we serve. Thank you for another exceptional year of fulfillment in our mission and for your ongoing support.

*Emily*

### ***Who are our Board of Directors?***

Our Board of Directors consists of a team of dedicated volunteers who have committed themselves to the leadership and guidance of the Center's mission, services, and organizational health. In fulfilling their roles, they draw on various levels of professional and lived experience in strengthening the Center's overall impact. Please contact Emily at [emv@bereavementcenter.org](mailto:emv@bereavementcenter.org) if you are interested in supporting these efforts. Whether participating on our board, helping run special events, or facilitating our children's groups, the Center's volunteers find their time serving our mission to be very meaningful and rewarding. We welcome you to join us!

### ***Did You Know?***

You can support the Center just by shopping on Amazon. Click on the Amazon link on our website before you shop, and a portion of your purchase will go to the Center. You can also visit AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)) and select The Center for Loss and Bereavement as your charitable organization. The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products. Every item available for purchase on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) is also available on AmazonSmile.

In addition you can help by purchasing items from our Amazon Wishlist. We gratefully accept supply donations to support our children's programs.



## Grief Notes on Adolescent Suicide

In recent years our country has been increasingly affected by this tragic epidemic, and not surprisingly, our Center has been supporting a great deal of these bereaved families. The numbers are staggering: according to the CDC, more than 5000 teenagers attempt suicide each day. With 1 per 25 attempts ending in a completed suicide, this makes it the second leading cause of death, behind accidents. Almost 90% of teen suicides are attributable to a diagnosable and potentially treatable mental illness. While many of these teens give clear warning signs, not all do.

Teens are vulnerable to stress, mental illness and suicide on numerous levels. They are subjected to significant social and environmental stressors, some of which are unique to their generation. Some of these are economic hardships, high divorce rates, family dysfunction and abuse, unprecedented competition for college and sports, and of course, the ubiquitous use of social media. The hyper connectivity of social media is stressful due to FOMO (fear of missing out), peer rejection, body shaming and cyber bullying.

Another powerful factor in teenage vulnerability is the brain itself, which undergoes rapid and radical change. Two crucial areas for functioning include the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala, neither of which fully mature until the early 20s. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for decision-making, logic, assessment of risk, judgment, and foreseeing consequences of actions. It is also the “inhibition center”, discouraging the individual from acting impulsively. The amygdala is where emotions are processed, interpreted and stored. The immaturity of the amygdala makes it difficult for the adolescent to make sense of his or her feelings or those of others. More importantly, the prefrontal cortex and amygdala don’t fully connect until adulthood, thereby rendering the teen more likely to make decisions based on emotional impact rather than upon logic.

The undeveloped adolescent brain, a history of family mental illness, intense stressors, a death or loss, and lack of peer and/or family support all can contribute to development of depression, resulting in risk of suicidality. Teen suicide is an attempt to solve a problem of intense pain, which is perceived to be unresolvable, with impaired problem-solving skills. This is why meaningful involvement by parents and other influential adults in a teen’s life is crucial.

Much ado has resulted from the Netflix series, “13 Reasons Why”, which has also been sometimes accessed by teens outside of their parent’s awareness. The show graphically depicts the suicide of a 17-year-old after chronicling her audio messages describing why she did it. There has been strong debate about the impact of the show. School officials, psychologists, and suicide prevention experts are concerned that teens, especially those with existing mood disorders are susceptible to contagion, i.e. “copycat” suicide attempts. Research finds this phenomenon can be found where suicides are glorified in the community/media. However, research also clearly shows that talking about suicide and resources for help can offer protective factors - talking about suicide does NOT cause suicide. The concerns of this show focus on how the suicide may have been viewed and whether it was processed with a supportive adult. Many are also concerned with the harmful perpetuation of blame and guilt on survivors of loved ones who have died by suicide. However, others argue that the show enhances prevention by stimulating honest conversations about suicide, essentially “teachable moments”, and raises awareness on the importance of addressing bullying, sexual assault, and systems of critical response.

The debate will likely continue, but parents are advised to monitor their children’s access to this show as well as social media usage. Parents can take a proactive role in initiating conversations with their teens even if they are not exhibiting overt signs of depression. Adults can encourage teens to view life from a “meta-perspective”. That is, to realize that “There’s life after that exam, post, party, photo, or that boy. High school is not forever. There’s always going to be more”.

Sometimes despite parent’s best efforts and optimal conditions, teens complete suicide anyway. Occasionally, teens appear functional and well-adjusted, but are silently struggling, and impulsively succumb to a stressor or trigger. Other teens are diagnosed with a mental illness and have undergone grueling and extensive trials of medications and psychiatric hospitalizations. Regardless of the best medical care and family support, there are unfortunately still high numbers of teens who fall to the all-consuming wish for relief through suicide. In these cases, nobody is to blame, and those surviving are most vulnerable in dealing with their own pain.

Suicide deaths result in grief that is extremely painful, complicated, and stigmatized for parents and surviving loved ones. This is profoundly life altering and requires months and years to reconcile. It is known in the field of suicide study that post-vention IS prevention, since having a loved one die and especially die by suicide actually increases one’s likelihood of becoming suicidal. Our Center exists to help such survivors and is dedicated to being part of the Suicide Prevention Task Force of Montgomery County. If you or a loved one has been affected by a death by suicide, please reach out- support is available and there are people who can help you hold your pain.

*If you or a loved one has dealt with your own suicidal thoughts, 24-7 help is available.*

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)



As part of the Montgomery County Suicide Prevention Taskforce, our Center has been involved in recent local events targeting awareness about the life and resilience of Kevin Hines, a survivor of attempted suicide. Visit [www.kevinhinesstory.com](http://www.kevinhinesstory.com) for more information about his inspirational effort in building a positive community response to our society’s suicide crisis.



# THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

## Children's Bereavement Program- Nello's Corner



The Nello's Corner program has been offering peer support groups in its current format for over 15 years. We remain committed to our philosophy which meets a child or teen wherever he/she is with the grief that is carried. It allows all to teach us what they need to understand and possibly even ease their burden. The sessions provide various modes of expression. With their permission, we would like to share some of their thoughts on grief, so that you too can gain new insight into what it feels like to be a grieving child or teen and perhaps recognize the benefits they have discovered while being part of a peer support group.



### Perspective from a Nello Teen Excerpts from... To Experience Grief

Grief is a strange experience. It is one of those topics that is very rarely talked about except between people who have experienced it. Grief is the experience you undergo when someone close to you dies, someone who genuinely impacts your life. It is hard and lonely and it can't be overcome in two episodes with a motivational speech from your best friend. It changes you. There are many misconceptions about grief in the modern world.

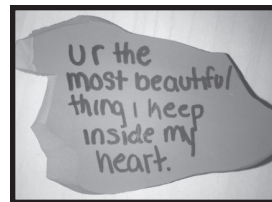
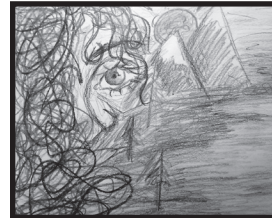
Grief is not being overcome by sadness, but a collection of thoughts and emotions as a result of tragedy. As such, everyone experiences grief differently. When we went home to a house already full of concerned friends, knowing that our mother would die the next day, we had already begun grieving. My father fell apart crying in the arms of a friend. My sister went into her room. I don't think I'll ever know what she did. I ran into my room, not daring to meet anyone's eye, and locked the door.

I just started pacing, repeating to myself the phrase "Oh my god!" over and over. I didn't know what to think. The thoughts and emotions were swirling through my head much faster than I could comprehend. The idea of my mother's death was there, on the surface, but it couldn't break through.

The largest misconception about grief is the seven stages. These so-called seven stages were actually from a study about a man with terminal illness, coming to accept the news. There's no specified "denial" moment or "acceptance" moment. I accepted my mother's death years ago, but I'm still sad and angry about it all the time. I go to group every other week, where I hear everyone say the same thing. (For me) There are really two stages of grief - Shock and post-shock. Many call this denial, but the word doesn't apply. We knew exactly what happened. The emotions just leaked in slowly. I would cry an average of once a day, but the truth is we just couldn't understand the full scope of the emotions. Then post-shock came, but by the time we had fully accepted the news, it was far enough in the past that we could adjust. Just like all emotional experiences, grief doesn't have a schedule.

One of the biggest problems people who experience grief have is support. Everyone wants to tell you how sorry they are for your loss, how they're thinking of you, how they're praying for you. These are all terrible things to say. "I'm sorry for your loss" is poor word choice because everyone who has ever grieved for someone has had to say "It's not your fault" about fifty times before they even get to the funeral. About two years ago I started responding "I forgive you". So what is the right thing to say to a grieving friend? Most people who have lost someone can't answer this question and often find themselves not knowing what to say when someone in their life loses someone. I have thought about this for many years, and (I believe) the best thing to say to a friend who loses someone is "That's terrible. I know you can get through this, and I'm here if you need me". This covers everything that people mean to say when they say the worst things. It conveys sympathy and support, but not too much of either.

No one can really understand grief. My own experience is much different than my father's or even my sister's. Nothing and no one can prepare you to grieve. It is an individual, lonely experience. The only way to get through it is to find others who understand you, be it family, therapy, groups, and be lonely together.



J.R.  
"The Poem of Grief"  
At Nello's Corner, it's comforting and you're not alone. Alanna  
This is our home. Tara Aliyah  
This is how we feel: Simone Bruno  
Sadness, Madness, Anginess, Happiness  
You could feel alone.  
You could feel discouraged like your coach is gone.  
Sometimes you blame yourself, but it's not your fault.  
But, here others know how it feels and people support you.  
It's fun to do the activities.  
Hopefully in the future, there will be machines to bring people back to life... that would be cool.



Nello's Corner offers high quality peer support groups led by our staff of experienced grief facilitators. Children can feel less alone when able to connect with others in similar situations.

Our program resumes in September:

#### Tuesdays:

- 7-11 year olds- 4:30-5:45 p.m.
- 9-11 and 12-14 year olds -7:00-8:15 p.m.

#### Wednesdays:

- 4-6 year olds 4:30-5:45 p.m.
- 15-18 year olds 7:00-8:15 p.m.

Registration is ongoing throughout the school year.

**Call 610-222-4115 for more information.**



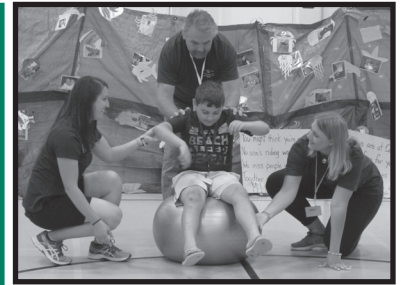
# THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

## Children's Summer Program

### *Riding the Waves*



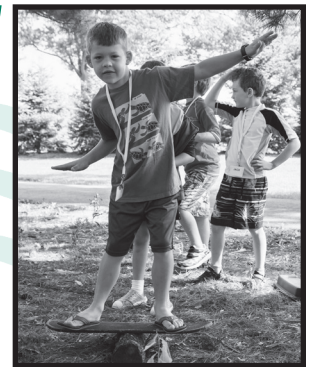
How do you regain balance when the waves of grief knock you over? Children and young teens were challenged with discovering strategies during the Center's annual **Camp Millie** summer bereavement program. Using crafts, games, cross fit, music and discussions, they determined that a lot has to do with listening, questioning, feeling, remembering, dreaming and trying. All agreed that by *Riding the Waves* together and finding ways to support one another, the process is less lonely and the challenges are less overwhelming.



## THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS !!!

*Tremendous Volunteers rode the waves with us, bringing balance to our Camp Millie 2018 team:*

Emily Cauchon  
 Robin Cavallo  
 Suzanne Ciuba  
 Mary Ellen Crowley  
 Audrey Ditzler  
 Melissa Faragalli  
 Connie Fretz  
 Marissa Gleason  
 Brenda Haberle  
 Jill Herman  
 Casey Interrante  
 Jake Marron  
 Robb Muse  
 Sonalee Panchal  
 Carmen Phillips  
 Amy Ramsey  
 Steve Rasbold  
 Joyce Saddler  
 Heather Tomes  
 Jen Toth-Pitcher  
 Gracie, our Therapy Dog



*Our fabulous teen helpers were:*  
 Kayla Ciuba  
 Olivia Keyte  
 Corrine Meyer  
 Gabrielle Muschert  
 Grace Ramsey  
 Ruby Ramsey  
 Tara Sringari

### Camp Millie was made extra special thanks to:

- **Tori Conicello-Emery** of Tempo!
- **Amy Johnston-Smith and Jim Smith** of The Gym and Tan Line Studio
- **Walter Cherkas** of Muddy Snow Productions
- **The Michael H. Wise II Memorial Foundation** for continued sponsorship of our Camper T-shirts. The Foundation honors Officer Wise who died in the line of duty, June 5, 2004
- **Ellen Watson** for the donations of camper gift towels and our water slide which provided a fun outlet for all
- **Donors** who contributed funds to help defray the cost of camp fees and programming

*To all of the campers and their families, thank you for sharing the week with us!*

## SPECIALIZED ADULT SUPPORT GROUP

*"Human connections are deeply nurtured in the field of shared story"*  
-Jean Houston

Groups are run on an as-needed basis and may include:

### Six Week Support Groups:

Loss of Spouse, Loss due to Suicide, Loss of Sibling,  
Loss due to Addiction, Loss of Parent

### Ongoing Support Groups:

#### Monthly Loss of Child:

For parents who have experienced the death of a child as a teen or adult (2nd Monday or 4th Thursday)

#### Bi-Weekly Young Adult Group (YAGS):

For ages 19-29

Every other Wednesday 7:00 - 8:15 p.m.  
Ongoing Registration/No Fee

For dates, times and cost please contact Ashley at  
610-222-4110 ext 123 or [amh@bereavementcenter.org](mailto:amh@bereavementcenter.org).

## PROFESSIONAL ROUNDTABLE TRAININGS

Our 2018/2019 Professional Roundtable Training Schedule is set and we are excited to offer 3 trainings. All trainings qualify for 3 CEUs for Pennsylvania Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors.

**On October 25, 2018 – Enduring Grief Through Progressive Illnesses:** 9-12:15 p.m. Though we think of grief as something that happens after a death, it often begins well before death arrives. With progressive, terminal illnesses, we naturally grieve large and small losses regularly and over long periods of time. This training will examine this anticipatory, active grief as people strive to cope and endure through this complicated journey.

**On March 28, 2019 – Case studies in Children's Grief:** 9-12:15 p.m. Feedback from participants in our past Case Studies trainings confirm that a great way to learn is through real life case examples. We will present several case studies that illustrate aspects of children's responses to a death in their life and strategies for supporting their grieving process.

**On April 25, 2019 – Suicide Aftermath:** 9-12:15 p.m. The incidence of suicide is rising and is certainly more visible now than ever before. How do we help suicide survivors cope with this devastating loss? We will explore suicide from the perspective of the survivor. What challenges do they face internally as they adjust to this loss? How can we help them adjust to and process their response to loss, which is often isolating and confusing?

Registration forms can be found at  
[www.bereavementcenter.org](http://www.bereavementcenter.org)

Questions? Contact Claire Drexler at 610-222-4110  
ext 104 or [csd@bereavementcenter.org](mailto:csd@bereavementcenter.org).

## COMMUNITY SHOUT OUTS

Thanks to the Program Buddies who were able to attend this year's Volunteer Appreciation dinner – it was our privilege to be able to honor you all!



Thank you to Nella Naticchione and Ava Fiumara for dedicating a school service project to help organize craft supplies at Nello's Corner! Nella represents a family legacy, the Nello Memorial Committee, which was formed in memory of her Uncle Nello and continues to help fund Nello's Corner as a donation-based program. Nella is one example of how our Center has had a long-term impact on multiple generations of people, including participants, donors, and volunteers. Many thanks to all of our Program Buddies and behind-the-scenes volunteers, like Nella and Ava, who are part of what keep us all going!



Special thanks to Round Guys Brewing Company in Lansdale! On August 4th they hosted their 5th anniversary party and donated all proceeds from their dunk tank to the Center! It was a great to see everyone in the community take a chance to soak the Mayor for charity!



Thank you to Team Super Smile! They are a team of special people, who recognize the super hero in every child! They hosted their annual Run Baby Run event on August 12th. This fundraiser helps support the Spreading Smiles fund and a portion of the proceeds support the Center. It was a great event in the Skippack community and we cannot wait to run next year!

Are you interested in hosting a fundraiser for us? If you have a great idea we would love to help you get started! Inspire your friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors to join you in supporting the Center for Loss and Bereavement. Please contact Donna Piergallini at 610-222-4110 ext 100 or [dp@bereavementcenter.org](mailto:dp@bereavementcenter.org)



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### **Board of Directors:**

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*Selaine Keaton*  
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*Anna Hillman*                  *Kathleen Thomas*  
*Marilyn Pennapacker*        *Ellen Watson*

### **Advisory Board:**

*Shirley Elrod and Christine Smith, Co-Founders*

## THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

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Therapist, Community Liaison  
Therapist, Training Coordinator  
Therapist  
Program Director, Group Facilitator  
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Therapist, Grief Notes  
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Administrative Coordinator  
Director of Development  
Group Facilitator  
Clinical Director, Therapist

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