

THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

Center Highlights

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Any form of art is a form of power; it has impact, it can affect change. It can not only move us, it makes us move. – Ossie Davis

In this 19th year of service at the Center for Loss and Bereavement, creative forces stir within us. Few experiences in this world can touch the depths of grief better than those which take hold of us from within, where feeling is palpable and transcends the body and mind. It is truly awe-inspiring just how diverse the human perspective can be. And yet, through artistic expression, differences in life, culture, language... all are shadowed by the breadth of what moves us in our humanity.

In our therapy offices and group sessions we frequently encourage the use of creative arts to help tell a story with personal meaning, reflecting core emotions. Our senses are tuned to observing how heartfelt wisdom is fostered through music, creative writing, holistic practices, and within a wide variety of art techniques. Hope is cultivated when these encounters are shared, connecting people through transformative growth. For that reason, our Center is dedicated to increasing awareness about grief *as well as* its many healing practices.

This year, we have been further expanding our space to share stories of resilience and expressions of grief beyond our walls. Along with bringing a new look and feel to our newsletter and website, we now have a presence on social media. We are grateful to have more opportunities to connect with you throughout the year and count on your involvement.

Whether directly participating in our programs, attending our special events and fundraisers, or engaging with us on social media, we eagerly invite you to join us in this endeavor. Please reach out to us – offer insight into your grief journey, moments that have impacted you, and what's helped you cope. Look for ongoing opportunities to share your story through the Center, to bring hope and connection to others in need.

Drawing on the Butterfly Effect, together we can build a stronger response to loss in our community. We genuinely thank you for your support and endorsement of these efforts.



Melancholy by Albert Gyorgy (Geneva)



Music and dance, sculpture, walks in nature, and creative writing are just a few of the ways people use artistic tools to work through grief.

Emily

Emily Vincent, LPC FT

CONNECT YOUR GRIEF

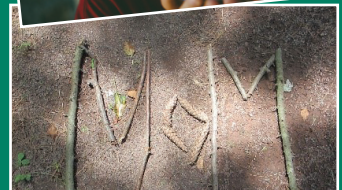
Q: *Where have the arts helped you move through your grief?*

A: *Who Knew* by P!nk and *I'll be Seeing You* by Billie Holliday

"These songs speak to many losses I've experienced. *Who Knew* sums up the shock of how unexpected loss can be and encourages me to take advantage of moments with loved ones while I can. *I'll Be Seeing You* reminds me that even if someone is gone, they are still with me in everyday places and things." - Allison

Have an example to share with others?

Follow this QR code or email Jamie at jl@bereavementcenter.org



PLEASE JOIN US!



Through the Lens of Hope

The Center for Loss and Bereavement will be hosting a very special event on the evening of **Thursday, May 2nd**. Please join us as we bring our mission into focus by sharing stories of grief and healing "Through the Lens of Hope".

The event offers an opportunity to connect with our staff and friends of the Center, while enjoying hors d'oeuvres, cocktails, inspiring photo displays and raffles. All are welcome to help raise awareness and funding to support our services! For more information please visit www.bereavementcenter.org/events.

WELCOME SHELLEY!

It is our pleasure to welcome Shelley Robbins to our staff as the newest member of our program team.

How did you come to the Center?

My time at the Center began in the spring of 2018, as a volunteer for the Nello's Corner children's program. I like to think that the Center and I both had a way of finding each other, at junctures of time when we both needed change and growth. I can honestly say that it has been a dynamic and enlightening adjunct to my life.

What is your background?

While serving in the medical field for over two decades, I have had the privilege of working with many families in crisis due to physical and emotional trauma. It is within that profession that I grew accustomed to helping them navigate life while IN their circumstance, IN the pit of illness or while watching their loved one die. At Nello's Corner, our work is different. It is helping children and their



families discover a way again in life AFTER death...in the profound messiness that follows such loss.

What has the experience been like so far?

The staff as a whole has embraced me openly and warmly and made me quickly realize that I was in fact, "home" and right where I needed to be, both for my own professional goals and for the grieving families. I find the work that we do in the programs to be one of great honor and intimacy...children often feel lost and we, as their supporters, help them to find light for their path out of the darkness.

At the Center, you will find Shelley facilitating several support groups in our **NELLO'S CORNER** program and she recently facilitated a six-week support group for Adult Sibling Loss. We look forward to utilizing her crafty talents during **Camp Millie** this summer as well as drawing on her expertise for development of future programs. Her obvious love of children and warm personality are a natural fit for our Center and we are thrilled she is onboard!



NELLO'S CORNER offers support groups for families with children and teens ages 4 – 18 years old who have experienced the loss of a close family member. Age-specific groups of 8-10 peers are scheduled on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, afterschool and in the evenings. A unique aspect of this program offers a professionally facilitated support group for the adult caregivers while the children are engaged. If you know of a family who could benefit, please share this newsletter and encourage them to give us a call. There is a place waiting in our circles of support at Nello's Corner. *Contact Lois at 610-222-4110, ext. 118 or lh@bereavementcenter.org*

Ideas to Increase your Mindfulness of Grieving Children

- **Reach out.** Even if there is no apparent response, your gesture is likely to be noticed and appreciated.

- **Timelines.** Know that grief is a life-long process. Children, like adults, do not just “get over it” in a month or a year. Time can help, but understand that even years after a death, new things come up that affect a grieving person.



- **Listen.** You do not need to know the right thing to say. Sometimes the right thing to say is nothing at all. The grieving child is the “expert” in his or her grief; as adults we can be most helpful by offering support for safe expression or conversation, on the child’s timeline.

- **Choose words with care.** If you work with children in any capacity, be mindful of how you say things – A simple sentence like “Give this to your mom” might cause a lot of pain, hurt, and anger to a child that has had a parent die. Instead you could say: “Give this to the adult at your house”.

- **Resources.** Grieving children feel different than their peers. Research shows that spending time with others experiencing similar situations, like navigating a loss, can validate, normalize and offer relief from feeling alone. Familiarize yourself with school and community programs, such as Nello’s Corner, so you can be a resource for grieving children and their families.

“I would like to thank Nello’s Corner for their commitment to helping children and their families deal with their unimaginable grief. I truly believe both my granddaughter and myself are in a much better place emotionally now than when we first arrived at the program 2 years ago. Thank you for your kindness, professionalism, sympathy, hugs and many tissues.”

- Nello’s Corner Adult Group Participant



DIRECT FROM THE KIDS... WHAT HELPS WITH MY GRIEF?

- Sometimes talking about it; sometimes not
- Imagining that the person is with me
- Talking out loud to the person who died
- Making a memory book
- Visiting the cemetery
- Going to a favorite place of my person who died
- Crying
- Having a safe space to be
- Letting go



BRANCHES OF HOPE:

It is difficult for children and teens to imagine that they are not the only ones trying to cope with the death of a family member. Grief tends to make one feel isolated and different. At Nello’s Corner, children find connection and understanding by bonding with each other. They are able to find similarities and differences that make their experience both normalized and unique, while reaching out for support. This year, we planted a tree on the wall of our circle room, where every participant of every group has a place to grow. Leaves, snowflakes, seeds and flowers of the changing seasons will provide a visual reminder of the many others who are growing upward and outward on Branches of Hope – together.

SPRING PROFESSIONAL ROUNDTABLE TRAININGS

It was good to see so many participants at our fall Professional Roundtable training. The small group setting was a perfect venue to discuss **Enduring Grief Through Progressive Illness**. We all benefitted from both the presentation and the valuable insight of the participants. This is why we love our small group format for learning! We have 2 more trainings scheduled for this spring:

3 CEs
EACH
TRAINING

MARCH 28, 2019

Case Studies in Children's Grief

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 loss and strategies for facilitating their grieving process. This training will focus on the unique characteristics and needs of the school-aged grieving child. What does their grief look like and how can we help them? We will address what they need at home and at school.

APRIL 25, 2019 Suicide Aftermath

The incidence of suicide has been increasing and it is certainly more visible now than ever before. How do we help suicide survivors cope with this devastating loss? We will learn about the challenges survivors face internally and how we can help them adjust to and process their response, which is often isolating and confusing.

Cost is \$70 for each training with a discount of \$130 for registration to both, held at the Center from 9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Questions? Contact Claire at 610-222-4110 ext. 104 or csd@bereavementcenter.org

Specialized Adult Support Groups

"Connection is the energy between people when they feel seen, heard and valued- when they can give and receive without judgment" - Brené Brown

Support groups are run on an as needed basis and are facilitated by a trained professional. Our groups are held in a relaxed environment and provide a safe space for individuals with similar types of losses to connect with and support one another.

Six Week Adult Support Groups

Loss due to Suicide, Loss due to Addiction,
Loss of Spouse for various ages,
Loss of Parent, Loss of Sibling

Ongoing Groups

Loss of Child

For parents who have experienced the death of a child as a teen or adult
2nd Monday, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Bi-Weekly Young Adult Group (YAGS)

For Ages 19-29 who have experienced significant loss(es)
Every other Wednesday, 7:00 – 8:15 p.m.
Ongoing Registration/No Fee

For dates, times, and cost, or to inquire about other group options, contact Ashley at 610-222-4110 ext. 123 or amh@bereavementcenter.org

Calling all Volunteers!

Are you looking for a unique, rewarding volunteer experience? Our volunteers are provided with an extensive training in our philosophy and practical skills for group facilitation in working with grieving children. This thorough course allows volunteers to help grieving children find connection and support. Once completed, volunteers can assist with our school year program, **NELLO'S CORNER**, and/or our summer bereavement camp, **Camp Millie**.

VOLUNTEER FACILITATOR TRAINING COURSE 2019

Attendance at all four sessions is mandatory.

1. Thursday, March 28th, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.
2. Thursday, April 4th, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.
3. CHOOSE ONE: April 9th, 10th, 16th, OR 17th for Group Observation, 4:00 or 6:30 p.m.
4. Thursday, April 18th 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

"I love that this program affords the kids some support that they might not be getting elsewhere during such a confusing and emotional time. I really enjoyed my time with my group and buddies! I left every day feeling fulfilled and happy for the connections that were made with the kiddos. My heart was full." - Audrey, Program Volunteer

Contact Christina today at 610-222-4110 ext. 119 or cml@bereavementcenter.org

Camp Millie

THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT Children's Summer Program

Celebrating our 15th Year of Camp Millie

It seems like just yesterday that our first summer bereavement camp was held in the backyard of our Skippack Center. Our vision was to provide a new program for grieving children and young teens to connect with one another in a setting of sun and fun, full of acceptance and care. All of our Center's professional staff were involved as well as support from a handful of enthusiastic volunteers. **Camp Millie** was born!

Fifteen years later, as our vision remains, we reflect on the changes – three different locations, varying themes and activities, all fueled with the dedicated energy of many volunteers and staff. Mostly, we remember the hundreds of campers who have poured their stories, emotions, challenges and strategies with grief into their time at camp. We wonder what changes they have experienced since then. A four-day camp program is not intended to provide all that is needed for



a grieving child or teen. However, we have learned that time spent with others who can understand and offer support, no matter how briefly, can make a difference to a grieving child or teen. We hope the participants of Camp Millie's past will remember this as well and continue to reach towards solace and support as they, like Camp Millie, grow older.



Helping Hands for Camp Millie

Full and part time volunteers are needed for the week of Camp – Monday, June 24th through Thursday, June 27th from 8:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

- **Camp Buddy:** Must be 20+ years old and have completed our Spring Volunteer Facilitator Training Course. Camp buddies are assigned specific campers to help with grief circles, art, games, etc.
- **Teen Helpers:** Friendly, outgoing, helpful teens who are 16 years or older to help prep activities, run errands, assist with various tasks.
- **Internship for College Students:** Seeking an energetic student of psychology, counseling or related field, interested in gaining some valuable hands-on experience to work as our camp intern for 2019. There is a small stipend for completion of duties, which include 4 meetings and the 4 days of camp. Participation in our Spring Volunteer Facilitator Training is preferred and enhances the intern experience.

Please contact Christina to inquire: 610-222-4110 ext. 119 or cml@bereavementcenter.org

Help to Lighten our Load! Offering a specialized children's bereavement camp each year can be costly to a small nonprofit. We gratefully accept any size monetary donations as well as Gift cards to stores such as AC Moore, Walmart, Amazon or Costco. These are used to help purchase craft and game supplies, snacks, and the numerous other items that make for a fun, supportive, and meaningful time for our campers.

Camp Millie 2019 ROAD TRIP ADVENTURE

JUNE 24TH, 25TH, 26TH, 27TH

9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Central Community Center in Lansdale, PA

Our 2019 theme will take campers down various roads of adventure, providing opportunities to discover personal strengths and develop coping skills needed for their journey with grief. Camp is for ages 6 to young teens who have experienced the death of a close family member. Space is limited to under 50 campers so an intimate and personal atmosphere is maintained. Families provide their own transportation and bag lunches. The fee per camper is \$100 with discounts for siblings. This includes all activities, supplies, a t-shirt and lunch on the last day. Some need-based scholarships are available.



Registration priority is given to new campers.

Registration forms are available at

www.bereavementcenter.org/camp-millie

or call 610-222-4110



Grief Notes on...Spirituality

Spirituality is a broad concept with many perspectives. In general, it includes a sense of connection to something bigger than ourselves and typically involves a search for meaning in life. For some, spirituality is intimately connected to practice of organized religion. For others, it is associated with a personal relationship with God or a higher power. Still others find meaning and interconnectedness through nature or the arts.

The practitioners at the Center are privileged to work with a diverse array of clients with myriad backgrounds and belief systems. We welcome atheists, agnostics, and devotees of all religions, and we aspire to meet people “where they are”.

Our clients frequently seek our services in response to violent, sudden, or seemingly meaningless deaths that can make the world appear dangerous, unpredictable, or unjust. The intense, life altering grief suffered from such losses can shatter one’s long-standing deeply held core beliefs. The client is impelled to seek meaning and sense of not only the loss, but the seemingly insurmountable task of living the rest of one’s life without the deceased. Spirituality can be an integral component of this task.

Some mourners, although grief stricken, are able to assimilate and integrate the death into their existing belief system rather seamlessly; in effect maintaining consistency with who they previously were. For example, a Christian might accept the death as “God’s will” and find solace in the notion of an afterlife and faith in reunification with the deceased. He or she may find strength and sustenance in prayer, perhaps even a deepening faith. Others, regardless of beliefs, have difficulty reconciling the death with their existing narrative. They may feel abandoned by God, betrayed, alone and questioning what they had previously taken for granted. After death, spiritual upheaval and questions are common and normative. In fact, many theologians, writers, and religious

figures in world history have experienced doubt about their faith, particularly in times of suffering. However, they assert that doubt and uncertainty have been essential to generate a deeper faith and intimacy with God. Some say a faith unquestioned and untested is no faith at all. The mourner’s challenge is to reconnect, modify, rebuild, or perhaps find an entirely new spiritual framework that accommodates the loss. Sometimes meaning must be lost before it can be found.

Ultimately, mankind’s most profound questions are unknowable, which does not negate the value of asking and discussing them. Even though sometimes we have no explanations, no solutions, and no cures, we do know that healing can occur in a nonjudgmental, curious and empathic environment. The inherent nature of spirituality is based on connection, which can be a great comfort during grief. We complement the work of religious ministers and rabbis, and hope to help people find peace and fulfillment in their life’s meaning.

Finding new purpose can be gradual and painstaking, but is best accomplished by engaging in restorative, meaningful activities. Many mourners find comfort and continuing bonds with the deceased via honoring their legacy through volunteer work or establishing a foundation. Others find connection through church services, team sports, book clubs, fundraisers, taking classes, playing with grandchildren, etc. Still others find spiritual sustenance through solitary activities such as meditation or prayer, gardening, listening to music, convening with nature or cooking. These endeavors foster resilience and assist in transcendence of even the most devastating traumatic losses.

The staff at our Center strives to provide a haven for clients to undergo the sometimes grueling soul-searching necessary for meaning making. We have tremendous respect for those who have entrusted us with these deeply personal and profoundly impactful conversations of the heart.

SPECIAL THANKS!



Sometimes you strike gold – and we have with Volunteer **Jake Marron**. He has been a volunteer since 2006 which makes him the longest standing volunteer at the Center. He has reached 600 hours of volunteering through his work at **NELLO’S CORNER**, **Camp Millie**, and special events. Jake has been a part of our fundraising efforts by attending events, appearing in videos, and giving personal donations to the Center. We are gracious in the acceptance of his most recent gifting of a brand-new air hockey table. It has energized Nello’s Corner! We are proud to have Jake on our team and we thank him from the bottom of our hearts!



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THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND BEREAVEMENT

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Do you follow us? In the past few months the Center has joined the world of social media! We are very excited to share updates about our programs, helpful articles, and stories about our how grief is experienced in the community. We already have hundreds of followers and we would love you to join us on this journey. Help us grow awareness and support for those grieving by following us on social media:



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