



Rest. Breathe. Remember.

Greetings of warmth and wellness from your St. Luke's Hospice Team. Losing someone you love is extremely difficult and grieving can be very hard work. Many people find that this can still be a time of difficulty. We would be honored to offer any support we can as you continue to work through everything that has happened.

A very personal journey

The process of grieving is different for each person. Some may weep for hours, while others worry because they have no tears at all. Some have trouble sleeping, while others find it difficult to stay awake. Concentrating or feeling productive at work may be difficult. There are many ways grief can manifest in a person's life.

Even though it may be extremely difficult right now, many find that going through this process actually nurtures resilience and healing in themselves. Don't lose hope.

Telling the story

Getting a clear picture of what happened may help you move forward. Author Albert Keller writes, "Grief will lead us to peace, but knows no shortcuts. There is no other way but through the forest of memories, and no other guide but grief."¹ You may find it helpful to talk with those who were present during the events leading up to the death. This includes your St. Luke's Hospice team. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Then, if you find it helpful, tell the story as often as needed to a trusted friend, family member, or professional.

Certain memories may trigger a lot of angry or confusing feelings – towards God, the person who died, doctors and nurses, yourself, or the overwhelming responsibilities. Let them surface along with the good. Often, the only way out is through.

CHILDREN AND GRIEF

Children tend to work through loss differently from adults. It's common to want to protect a child from the pain of grief, but that may actually complicate things. Let them know that talking about the person who died, crying, and expressing anger are all OK.

Many children have feelings of guilt when a loved one dies. It may be important to reassure them that nothing they said or did contributed to the death. If you would like more information on children and grief or support resources for them in the community, please contact us.

You are not alone

After several months, many people find that the support of family, friends and co-workers has faded. You may feel a desire to talk about what you are experiencing, but sense that others are uncomfortable hearing it. Hospice nurse and author Barbara Karnes notes, "anger held inward becomes depression."² Finding someone who will listen is important. A grief support group, either in person or online, may be helpful to you.

Due to the physical and emotional toll this process can take, an exam by your medical doctor is encouraged if you are noticing any new or recurring symptoms. You may also want to be cautious about making any major decisions in your life until the swirl of grief settles. Remember that St. Luke's Hospice is available to you for up to 13 months after your loved one's death to provide support, information, and resources to you and your family.

Deep Breathing Exercise

Grief is a process. It cannot be hurried, ignored or avoided. In the midst of everything, don't forget to slow down and get plenty of rest. Some find that practicing slow, deep breathing helps to reduce tension and stress.

1. Sit or stand in a comfortable, relaxed position.
2. Take a slow deep breath, counting to yourself 1-2-3-4. Allow your abdomen to expand, rather than raising your shoulders.
3. Slowly release your breath, counting again 4-3-2-1. Allow your muscles to relax as you exhale.
4. Repeat several times.

When to Practice...

- Before you pick up the phone
- At night before sleep, or right away in the morning
- While folding clothes, washing dishes or watering plants
- At your favorite spot to relax
- If you are not able to get out, sit or lie comfortably and visualize a relaxing place instead
- While on a walk or bike ride
- Find a phrase or word to focus on instead of counting, such as: *breathe* or *I am at peace* or *be still my soul*.

In addition, if you or your loved one served in the military, as a **We Honor Veterans** partner, we will do all we can to both support you and connect you with resources that can help.

Endnotes

1. **At The Close of Day: A Person-Centered Guidebook on End-of-Life Care**, by Lance L. Davis and Albert H. Keller, Gorham Printing, Rochester, Washington, 2013, p. 159.
2. **The Final Act of Living**, by Barbara Karnes, Barbara Karnes Books, Inc., 2003, p. 185.



"Grief is a journey, often perilous and without clear direction, that must be taken. The experience of grieving cannot be ordered or categorized, hurried or controlled, pushed aside or ignored indefinitely. It is inevitable as breathing, as change, as love. It may be postponed, but it will not be denied."

— Mollie Fumia

If you or a loved one would like additional information or support, or want to decline future mailings or phone calls, contact St. Luke's Hospice Duluth at **218.249.6100**.

St. Luke's Hillside Clinic
220 North 6th Avenue East, Duluth
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