What is the shape of your grief?

The holidays can be a joyful time of family togetherness, they can also be a painful dark time.

People talk a lot about their blessings and what they have, but what feels much stronger is the sense of what is missing. The empty seat that can’t be filled is very “noticeable” for those who have experienced a loss. I was reading a blog that described this time of year as the Bermuda Triangle—Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s. Others who commented described it as an octagon with some birthdays and anniversaries sprinkled in.

This got me thinking about the shape of grief. What shape does your grief take? I lean towards a circle… I have lost so many people in a tight spiral of time, each with their own memories and favorite things that are tied all around this time of year. The triggers can come in many forms. All it takes is a song or smell or some kind of small reminder to bring back a flood of emotions.

Time is a funny thing. It feels short and long all at once. As more time passes there is more apart than together, more distance since the last time, more revolutions of space and time. Sometimes you are spiraling towards the center, where it is more intense, and other times you are taking the long way around the outside.

It doesn’t get easier, you just get stronger and more capable. You find ways to cope. The year’s end brings photo montages and year in reviews. It can be cathartic to look back and then be able to start over fresh, but it can also be very sobering and painful to relive it all yet again.

My family celebrates both Hanukkah and Christmas. My new tradition is that each year I am getting an ornament for our tree, or a necklace for my neck that symbolizes my dad. The first year it was a pendant that said “LOVE, ME” in my Dad’s handwriting. The following year it was an Origami Owl Living Locket, with each charm symbolizing my dad in some way. My mom had a necklace made for herself and one for me, it is a spiral of silver with a quote printed on it. Hers has her wedding song and mine has my favorite quote. This year, I am ordering a Moonglow pendant with

Feel free to contact our Bereavement Team:

New Castle County 302-478-5707
Kent County 302-678-4444
Sussex County 302-856-7717
Pennsylvania 484-259-0017

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the phase of the moon on the day he became my guardian angel.

My advice to anyone out there who is hurting at this time of year would be to take care of YOU! That would be what your loved one would want for you. Get enough rest and eat well. Do something that brings you joy. Buy yourself something special. If they were here to do it for you, they would, but they can’t. Buy yourself flowers! Life is too short not to enjoy the ride. I just think the wishing and longing for what can never be is a strong force that is difficult to conquer. No necklace or ornament will bring any of my lost relatives back for a hug.

6 Tips for HEALING

Give yourself the time to let grief run its course: The grieving process is personal to you and thus should go at your own speed. There isn’t a deadline set to feel a certain way. Remember, grief is not a one-time event, but a process and goes through cycles. Don’t put yourself on a timetable to be finished grieving. In reality, the grieving process may not end, but it will get easier over time.

• **Seek help outside of family and friends:** Grief can feel very lonely, even when you have loved ones around. Often sharing your sorrow with others who have experienced similar losses, who are not your family, can help.

• **Continue to have a support system:** Keep friends and family close, spending some time alone is fine, but long period of isolation may not be. Allow loved ones and friends to share in your sorrow or simply be there when you cry.

• **Keep your life moving:** There is comfort in routine, activities with friends and every day life. Do as much of this as you feel comfortable doing. Try a new activity. It can be a positive step forward in your life.

• **Allow yourself to be happy and let humor into your world:** It’s okay to allow yourself to enjoy moments of happiness. You can allow moments of happiness and even laughter and still grieve your loved one. Laughter truly can be helpful in the healing process and is a healing and healthy release.

• **Realize that what you may see as a “setback,” is natural and is okay:** Grief is a journey, even when you may feel you have begun to heal and re-engage in life, there will be times when your loss still hits you hard. Holidays, birthdays, or special dates can be difficult. Seeing a photo of your loved one, hearing stories about them, or visiting a place that was special to them can trigger grief to resurface. Don’t be too hard on yourself when this happens, or let these emotions frustrate you. It’s natural to still have grief resurface in these situations. Being compassionate with yourself is important.

**BOOKS TO READ**

Many people find reading about the experiences of others who have lost a loved one provides them with a wider perspective and with ideas for coping. With the holidays just around the corner, here are a few seasonally-themed books that may help you and your family.

*How Will I Get Through The Holidays?,* James Miller, Willowgreen Publishing.

*Thoughts for the Holidays: Finding Permission to Grieve,* Doug Manning, In-Sight Books.

*Holiday Hope: Remembering Loved Ones During Special Times of the Year,* Fairview Press.

**Please Note:** Delaware Hospice generates no revenue from the books we suggest. Book recommendations are provided for education purposes only.
The support activities listed below and on the next page are for adults who are grieving the death of a loved one. These programs help you learn about the grief process, receive support in a caring environment, learn from those who are going through a similar experience, and ultimately feel less alone in your grief.

New Castle County

New Castle County Office
16 Polly Drummond Center, 2nd Fl.
Polly Drummond Shopping Center
Newark, DE 19711
T: 302-478-5707

Groups in New Castle County are led by Leslie Eames, MA, CT. To register for a group, please contact Leslie at 302-478-5707, x1153 or leames@delawarehospice.org.

Six-Week Support Groups

Healing After the Loss of a Loved One During the Holiday Season
Thursdays, Dec. 1st - Jan. 12th *
*Will not meet Dec. 22nd
6:00pm – 7:30pm
Delaware Hospice Office, Newark

Healing After the Loss of a Young Spouse/Life Partner (Under Age 60)
Thursdays, Feb. 2nd - March 9th
6:00pm – 7:30pm
Delaware Hospice Office, Newark

Monthly Drop-in Groups

Loss of a Spouse/Life Partner (All Ages)
1st Tuesday of every month
2:00pm – 3:30pm
Delaware Hospice Office, Newark

Young Loss of a Spouse/Life Partner (Under Age 60)
1st Wednesday of every month
6:00pm – 7:30pm
Delaware Hospice Office, Newark

Middletown Group

4th Thursday of every month *
*Nov. and Dec. we will meet the 3rd Thursday on 11/17 and 12/15
2:00pm – 3:30pm
MOT Senior Center
300 S. Scott Street
Middletown, DE 19709

Monthly Social Support Group

An opportunity for those who have experienced the death of a spouse or life partner to share your loss and learn helpful ways to cope with your grief. (All ages). Each person pays for own meal and beverage. RSVP By the day before each dinner by contacting Leslie.

Next Step Dinners

4th Tuesday of every month
6:00pm – 8:00pm
Michael’s Restaurant
1000 Churchman’s Road
Newark, DE 19713

New Hope brings life to children struggling with loss

New Hope offers two four day summer camps. Camp New Hope gives children the opportunity to connect with others their own age who have had a similar experience. The environment is safe and fun, with age appropriate traditional camp and grief activities and experiences.

Camp dates will be announced in February!
For more information, please contact your Bereavement Counselor.

New Hope
Provided by Delaware Hospice
Groups in Kent County are led by Sondra Satterfield, MSW, LCSW, or by Judy Pantalino, MS, LACMH. To register, contact Sondra at 302-678-4444, x2103 or ssatterfield@delawarehospice.org, or contact Judy at 302-678-4444 x2101 or jpantalino@delawarehospice.org.

**SIX-WEEK SUPPORT GROUP**

**Healing After the Loss of a Parent**

*Wednesday, Jan. 11th – Feb. 22nd*

*Will not meet Feb. 1st*

5:30pm – 7:00pm
Delaware Hospice Office, Dover
Led by Judy

**MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUPS**

**Healing After the Loss of a Loved One**

2nd Monday of every month
1:30pm – 3:00pm
Delaware Hospice Office, Dover
Led by Judy

**Healing After the Loss of a Spouse or Life Partner**

1st Wednesday of every month
5:30pm – 7:00pm
Delaware Hospice Office, Dover
Led by Judy

**Healing After the Loss of a Loved One**

3rd Wednesday of every month
1:00pm – 2:30pm
Delaware Hospice Center, Milford
Led by Sondra

**SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUPS**

Each person pays for their own meal and drinks. RSVP to Sondra.

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**NEW BEGINNINGS LUNCHEONS**

**New Beginnings Brunches - Loss of a Loved One**

2nd & 4th Mondays of every month
11:00am – 12:30pm
The Countrie Eatery
950 N. State Street, Dover, 19901

**Healing After Loss**

1st Monday of every month
9:00am – 10:30am
Cancer Support Community
18947 John J. Williams Hwy (Rt. 24)
Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971

**New Beginnings Brunch - Loss of a Loved One**

4th Wednesday of every month
11:00am – 12:30pm
Rudy’s Family Restaurant
17064 S. Du Pont Hwy.
Harrington, 19952

**Healing After the Loss of a Loved One**

3rd Wednesday of every month
1:00pm – 2:30pm
Delaware Hospice Center, Milford
Led by Sondra

**New Beginnings Luncheons**

Every Thursday (except holidays)*

*No lunches from Dec. 8th - Jan. 5th*

11:30am – 1:00pm
This is an opportunity to socialize with others who have lost a spouse or life partner. There is time for sharing and learning how others are coping with loss. Participants pay for their own meal. RSVP By the day before each dinner by contacting Midge.

**Next Step Dinners**

3rd Thursday of every month
5:30pm – 7:00pm
Irish Eyes Restaurant
105 Union Street
Milton, DE 19968
Lunch Bunch talks

Presented by Dr. Judy Pierson, Clinical Psychologist, our popular Lunch Bunch Lectures are organized by our Family Support Center and are open to everyone. Seating is limited; please register early. The fee for lunch is $5.

Lunch is served at noon. The lecture runs from: 12:30pm-1:30pm

December 9- How to Stop Feeling Lonely*
*2nd Friday due to Festival of Trees

The National Science Foundation recently reported that unprecedented numbers of Americans are lonely. In this study, they found that one in four of the people they interviewed said that they have no one with whom they can talk about their personal troubles or triumphs. Loneliness is a painful emotion. Human beings are relational beings. We are meant to be connected. Come learn concrete suggestions for reducing isolation and getting connected to others.

January 6- Understanding Bipolar Disorder

In any given year, research suggests 5.7 million Americans are affected by bipolar disorder. This workshop will explore some of the myths about bipolar disorder. It will also identify the common symptoms, treatment options and best way to support someone experiencing this disease.

February- No Lunch Bunch this month.

March 3- Are you a Highly Empathic Person?

Do people easily open up to you? Do you find it difficult not to absorb other’s emotions? Do you find it challenging to be around a lot of people? Do you need a fair amount of alone time? Do you find yourself drained by others but hate the idea of hurting someone’s feelings? If so you may be a highly empathic person or “empath.” Come see if this is a useful concept for understanding some of the challenges you face and improve your ability to cope with them.

Extra Workshop:
March 3- 2:00pm – 4:30pm- The Mask You Live In

Come see the moving documentary, The Mask You Live In, which explores how our culture’s very narrow definition of masculinity harms boys, men and society at large. This film looks at how boys are encouraged to hide their true feelings and deny their need for support from others. It also examines the lasting impact this has on men’s lives and their relationships with women.

CANCELLATIONS: In the event of inclement weather, please check the website or call the office for any cancellations.
Hope For The Holidays Workshop

Any child (age 6-17) who has experienced the recent loss of a loved one will benefit from this workshop. The focus of the workshop will be to talk about the difficulty of grieving during the holidays. The group will discuss things to do, positive ways to cope, and will create a holiday ornament.

**Saturday, December 10th**  
10:00AM-12:30PM

**Delaware Hospice Newark Office & Delaware Hospice Milford Center**  
Space is limited for each group, RSVP by December 2nd  
Waffles will be provided

For more information, please contact:

New Castle County & Pennsylvania  
Earline Vann, BS, CT  
302-478-5707  
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Kent & Sussex Counties  
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