Pathways

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time to fly

annual butterfly release

sunday
august 18

12pm and 3pm

As you look to the sky, the butterfly catches flight and brings a renewed sense of hope. The butterfly is a universal representation of evolution within a difficult, if not tumultuous transition which is not unlike the journey we all take when losing someone we love. Though the journey may cause great pain, there is always hope of transforming to something stronger and more beautiful in your own life. The wonderful thing about gathering with family and others who have experienced loss is discovering that you are not alone, and can reap in the love and support from those who surround you. Imagine that moment, as you think of your loved one and release that butterfly to the sky... it truly is a cathartic moment! Join us!

Since 1998, Bartolomeo & Perotto Funeral Home, and more recently together with Walker Brothers Funeral Home, has hosted the annual Butterfly Release to support the aftercare of all who have had a loss in their lives. This year's event takes place on Sunday, August 18 at the YMCA Camp Northpoint, 249 N Greece Rd, Hilton. There are two releases, one at 12pm and 3pm, with a free picnic after each for you to enjoy with family and friends. Please, give us a call if you have questions or your heart calls you to this moving event.

Join us!

rsvp by AUG 9: call 585-720-6000

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grief & loneliness

by, Andrea Piccone, MS

Someone you deeply love recently passed away. The many preparations you tirelessly, but lovingly brought together for the funeral service, are now over. Maybe you lost your husband or wife of 50 years. Maybe you lost a sibling, a parent, or a child. No matter who it is, your world has turned upside down, your mind is fuzzy, you're exhausted but can't sleep and your heart is aching. The phone calls slow down, or stop altogether. Your family and friends return to work and everyone gets back to daily life again, that is, everyone but you. You are feeling stuck and uncertain about everything, maybe even still in shock. You have no idea where you left off before your loved one passed. Whatever you were doing doesn't seem important anymore. Focusing on anything is difficult and no matter what you are feeling, managing your emotions and mental stability have become an obvious challenge.

It begins to feel easy and almost natural to close yourself off from the world. You come up with plenty of reasons to want to be alone. It may be simply pure anxiety and depression; you are hurting, it's impossible to hide and you don't want to be seen in this state. You're fatigued from being in distress, taking numerous calls and visitors.

The urge to isolate becomes a defensive reaction to how the people around you are responding to your loss. Well-meaning people may inadvertently push you to "feel better" too soon or you are a caregiver and you have a natural instinct to "do what is best for others." Maybe you feel the need to reassure everyone that "you are doing ok," when the truth is, you feel like no one understands what you are going through. After invariably reassuring others, you tire of appeasing others by trying to make them feel better about the death rather than focusing on your own grieving.

People who lose a spouse often isolate because their social world has altered. They have spent many years attending gatherings and occasions with other couples. They may not have any single friends and now being with other couples may make them feel like a "third wheel," reinforcing feelings of loneliness. The grief tells them that "it will be easier to be alone" because facing change is too painful, especially at the onset of the grieving process. In time, isolation can become a slippery slope, leading to loneliness, despair and depression.

There are many reasons for feeling lonely. One may simply be proximity, family members live out of state or many hours away from the griever. The physical distance makes it difficult to receive the kind of support needed during this time. In contrast, there are people with many family and friends around them, yet they still feel alone. This kind of loneliness can develop when the person lacks quality relationships in their life. They have relationships that are superficial, complicated or disconnected. Grief is intense and needs to be expressed in a way that is healthy and cathartic. Feeling like there is no one to talk to and confide in can result in a downward spiral of negative thinking and self-talk.
vThoughts and feelings become assumptions which get confused with facts and reality. For example, instead of thinking within real terms like, "I am struggling with how to cope without him/her around and it's going to take time to adjust and find a new way of living" The assumption is "No matter what I do, I will be miserable, I just don't fit in anywhere, I can't change." When we grieve, it is so important to increase our self-awareness as it is the only way to recognize negative thinking. When you are asked out to attend a social event with a friend and you find yourself automatically responding with negativity, challenge your thinking. Why are you seeing the invite as negative? Is your reason genuine or are you just saying no regardless of what the event is? Are there valid reasons for not accepting an invitation? Maybe the people inviting you are toxic, and being with them makes you feel worse- that is a valid reason. Your social circle may be superficial and quick to shut down your grief because its too hard for them to face, also a good reason to say no. The point is, we need to evaluate our external world and determine how healthy and supportive it is. It is important to understand how we are processing our grief internally. What we need may not be what we want. Being vigilant of our needs and challenging our decisions is the only way to gain insight into what can help us and what is hurting us.

Determining why we are lonely is essential. Is it because we are lacking healthy supportive people in our life? Are we intentionally isolating? It could be a combination of both. When people we thought would be there for us, aren't, it reinforces feeling like an outcast and loneliness, tempting us to shut everyone out and isolate. On the other hand, are we are not accepting help when people are truly reaching out to give support? When your friends and relatives keep calling you and you don't call back or you always say no to an invite, they may stop calling. This may grow into a negative disposition which in time pushes people out of your life. It is also common for people to have healthy and supportive people in their life, but these same people are not in a close, physical proximity to give the kind of support the griever really needs. Whatever the reasons, gaining insight into your loneliness is the first important step toward finding a solution.

How to combat loneliness:

Before getting into suggestions and guidelines, it's important to adopt a philosophy that will move you toward attaining balance. Balance in any realm of our life is the foundation to health and happiness. For example, it is ok to stay home on a weekend rather than socialize with friends if you need time to unwind and reflect. However, refraining from any kind of socializing for several months in a row can be a bad thing. Plan your decisions and be aware of your behaviors. Trying anything new may take a few tries until you get comfortable reaching out. Be patient with yourself as well as proactive.

- **Recognize negative thinking.** If you are saying to yourself, "It has been many years since I played softball. I probably stink at it now and people will be disappointed, besides I have no energy for that." A more realistic view would be, "It has been so long since I played softball that I am afraid my skills may be rusty. Everyone said it's a lot of fun though." If you struggle with depression, it may be easy to dismiss opportunities and the positive benefits of pushing out of your comfort zone. If you are the type of personality that is naturally introverted without grieving, then you may have to push yourself a bit more and get more support when doing so. Reminding yourself continually that you don't know an outcome until you try, will be critical. If you discover that you need a higher level of support, cognitive behavioral therapists are particularly helpful in combating negative thinking.

- **Start with small steps.** Do what is practical for you, this way you avoid the anxiety of high expectations and pressure. Start with writing an email, join a blog or send a letter or card by mail to someone. Make it a point to pick up the phone once a week or more. Decide the frequency in which you are willing to reach out and push yourself a bit, then stick to your plan. When you are in public, make eye contact with people, smile or say hello. Simple steps will prevent you from getting overwhelmed and will gradually build your confidence and inspire motivation to socialize. If your family and friends are out of town, consider using Facetime to enhance your contact with them, but also try to increase your actual visits with them.

- **Avoid toxic relationships.** Evaluating your relationships after your experience a loss is important. Are these people allowing you to express your grief and not be judged? Can you comfortably be yourself around them? How are the people in your life responding to your grief? Are they telling you "it's time to move on," do they change the subject when you bring up your loved one? Do they respect the very personal coping methods that you are using? If you have toxic people in your life, it is vital to take action and ideally clear away these people in your life and do so as soon as possible. If it is not that easily done, like co-workers or in-laws, siblings, etc… then come up with a plan that will limit your contact with them. If you keep toxic people in your life, not only will you not heal, but your grief and mental health can get worse.

- **Find other grievers.** Look for proof that you are not alone. Meeting other grievers will naturally move you toward healing just by being around others who are in the same struggle. Fellow grievers will help you to communicate your intense grief more readily when you hear that they are feeling just like you are. You will likely feel more heard, validated and not judged.

- **Adopt a pet.** If you are physically and financially capable of caring for a dog or cat, having a pet can be very therapeutic and can help combat loneliness. Having to be needed by someone or something gives us a renewed sense of purpose. If you love animals but are unable to own a pet, consider volunteering at an animal shelter.

- **Volunteer.** Giving or helping others in any capacity will bring you some fulfillment and inspiration. You will feel productive and you may likely meet new people who could become friends, forming new social circles in your life that feel right. You may meet people who have even greater struggles or crisis to endure. Being faced with others who have overcome serious odds and summoned the courage to reach out for help can be inspiring for your own journey.

Most of all, remain hopeful. Remember that your loved one who has passed would want you to be happy. Find ways to connect with them in new and meaningful ways, continuing to live your life in the most fulfilling ways possible.

ugh. pre-plan my funeral... why?

- SAVES MONEY.
  Many funeral homes offer discounts or payment plans to participants who pre-plan their funeral. And consider paying off the cost of the funeral over the course of time.

- YOU HAVE A SAY.
  Your family will work their hardest to honor you in your memorial service or funeral, but only you know exactly what you want and can make your final requests known. Planning your funeral the way you intend it, can make it easier down the line.

- TAKE AWAY THE FINANCIAL BURDEN.
  Funerals are not cheap. When you pre-plan, you can pay for your own funeral and remove the burden from your family members.

- YOUR TIME AT YOUR SPEED.
  Most funerals are arranged in a week or less, sometimes inducing hasty decisions. This gives the opportunity to be more methodical about the process when you plan ahead.

- SHOP AROUND.
  You shop around for other big ticket items; why not for the right funeral home? When you take the time to plan your funeral, you can feel more confident that you have found the right funeral home for you.

- ASK THE QUESTIONS YOU WANT.
  When you pre-plan your funeral, you are present and able to ask all the questions that are important to you. You also determine whether or not the answers work for you.

- FIND THE RIGHT PEOPLE.
  The way things feel between a family and the funeral director can be so crucial. Pre-planning gives you the opportunity to choose the right funeral director(s) that you are confident will do the best job making your family comfortable and still keep true to your requests.

Like

Walker Brothers
Funeral Home

The Art of Healing

Grief & Loss Support Group

Looking for a safe place to get the help you need with your grief?

This free art therapy group helps sort out confusion, guilt, stress, anxiety and many other complex feelings that leave us feeling overwhelmed from grief. The end result is more clarity bringing us closer to healing.
- No art experience necessary!

Andrea Piccone, MS is an experienced Art Therapist and Artist. She earned her Bachelors degree in Fine Arts & Illustration with a concentration in Psychology at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), furthering her education with a Master's Degree in Art Therapy from Nazareth College. She worked several years for The Society for the Protection and Care of Children (SPCC) as an Art Therapist and Social Worker. Andrea continues her work as a freelance artist, and is now a full-time employee at Bartolomeo & Perotto Funeral Home in Administration. She runs The Art of Healing art therapy groups here at Bartolomeo & Perotto funeral home & St. Charles Borromeo Church.

▶ **NEW GROUPS FORMING**

Night Group - starts **AUG 19**
Day Group - starts **SEPT 5**

For more information or to sign up, call Andrea Piccone at: **585-720-6000** or **email: andrea@bartolomeo.com**

coming up!

▶ AUG 18 - Butterfly Release

FALL SEMINARS

▶ Coping with Grief

▶ Funeral Benefits for Veterans