

The dynamics of grief within families by Timothy Soucy, Bereavement Coordinator

The death of a loved one can be one of the most intensely painful experiences we will ever encounter. Managing our own grief and loss is a challenge within itself, but there is another layer to contend with. We do not grieve alone. Most of us are interacting with family members who are also experiencing their own grief and loss for the same loved one. Because people feel, experience, and respond to these losses in different ways, grief within families can be complex. This article, much of which is based on Dr. Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory, will explore several facets of grieving within families.

The way someone dies, as well as how their death is interpreted, will impact how individuals and families cope. For example, when a person with dementia dies after 18 years, one family member may be relieved because they did most of the caregiving, while another family member's response may be the complete opposite. If the family understands and interprets the death of a loved one similarly, this will make it easier for them to cope with their loved one's death. Some factors that can be interpreted differently include whether the death was sudden or slow, how the person's physical, emotional,

and spiritual pain were managed, how old they were, and whether family members were able to be present and provide care.

Another dynamic is that when a family member dies, their functional role within the larger family comes to an end. While every loss is felt deeply, not every death presents the same level of adjustment for the family. When my grandparents died, it was sad; however, we experienced the loss of my grandfather more strongly because of the role he played as the stabilizing force for the larger family. This is not to diminish my grandmother's roles, but it was my grandfather who brought the family together. Since his death, we have struggled to come together

for family events. Roles change within the family after a death, and this may bring conflict if there are differences of opinion about who should assume the roles that the deceased used to fulfill.

Individual grieving styles are another common factor that play a role within the family dynamic. Some people internalize their grief with few expressions of emotions, while other family members need to verbalize their grief and express their emotions with lots of tears. Some process their grief through withdrawing from family gatherings while others need to be around people.

Within all these family dynamics, the best and most healing practice is to be kind to ourselves – and to others who grieve differently from us. We need to have the courage to practice and tell others what is helpful to us, and the grace to understand and support family members who are grieving differently from us.

Grief is individual, yet most of us do not grieve alone. If you are struggling with difficult family dynamics in grief, you are not alone. Your bereavement coordinator is here to help, so please reach out if you need support.





Calendar

Bangor Area Grief Support

Grief can feel isolating and lonely, and griever are sometimes surprised by the intensity and duration of their grief. Here at Northern Light, we believe that no one should grieve alone. Our bereavement coordinators are available for questions and grief support. Please feel welcome to contact your bereavement coordinator, Jane Cornman, to learn more about how we can help, or to sign up for a support group: 207-944-5534 / jcornman@northernlight.org.

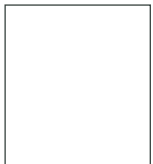
Monthly Drop-in Grief Support Group (in person)

Tuesday drop-in grief support groups continue on the fourth Tuesday of the month, 2-3:30, at a local church in Bangor. The next two meetings will be on August 26 and September 23.

Wednesday Evening Fall Grief Support Group - Starts September 17 on Zoom:

We will be offering an 8-week online grief support group on Wednesday evenings, September 17 to November 5, 6-7:30 pm. Attending all eight meetings is recommended, and because we meet online, participants can participate even while traveling. To join or find out more information, please contact one of our facilitators: Jane Cornman (207-944-5534 / jcornman@northernlight.org) or Linda Hopkins (207-400-8714 / hopkinsl@northernlight.org).

“When I miss you the most, I look inside and there you are.”



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Calendar

South Portland Grief Support

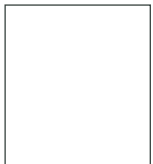
In-Person 6-Week Grief Support Group starts September 25: We will meet on Thursdays from 1 to 2:30 at our South Portland office. Meetings are weekly. The last meeting will be on October 30. To register or for more information call Linda Hopkins at 207-400-8714.

Fall Grief Support Group on Zoom: We are offering an 8-week online grief support group on Wednesday evenings, September 17 to November 5 from 6:00-7:30 pm. Attending all eight meetings is recommended. For more information or to register, please contact one of our facilitators: Jane Cornman (207-944-5534 / jcornman@northernlight.org) or Linda Hopkins (207-400-8714 / hopkinsl@northernlight.org).

Monthly Zoom Grief Support Meetings: Next meetings are on August 5 and September 2 from 1 to 2 pm. If you are interested in attending, contact Bereavement Coordinator Linda Hopkins (207-400-8714 or e-mail hopkinsl@northernlight.org.) Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month.

Support groups are only one of the supports we offer. For more information about grief support, please contact Linda Hopkins, 207-400-8714 or hopkinsl@northernlight.org

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Calendar

Waterville Grief Support

Grief can feel isolating and lonely, and griever are sometimes surprised by the intensity and duration of their grief. Here at Northern Light, we believe that no one should grieve alone. Our bereavement coordinators are available for questions and grief support. Please feel welcome to contact your bereavement coordinator, Jane Cornman, to learn more about how we can help, or to sign up for a support group: 207-944-5534 / jcornman@northernlight.org.

Waterville Area Grief Support Groups

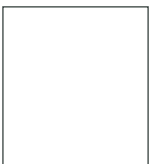
In-Person Grief Support Groups

We are not currently offering in-person meetings in Waterville. If you would prefer an in-person experience, please contact Jane Cornman for assistance with finding a local grief support group.

Wednesday Evening Fall Grief Support Group - Starts September 17 on Zoom:

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Calendar

Ellsworth Area Grief Support

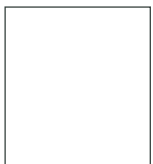
Ellsworth Area Grief Support:

Grief and grieving is different for each of us. If you are struggling with grief, have questions, concerns, or if you would like information about bereavement support groups, please contact Tim Soucy, Bereavement Services Coordinator, at 207-356-1497 or tesoucy@northernlight.org or our tollfree number at 1-800-757-3326.

Wednesday Evening Fall Grief Support Group - Starts September 17 on Zoom:

We will be offering an 8-week online grief support group on Wednesday evenings, September 17 to November 5, 6-7:30 pm. Attending all eight meetings is recommended, and because we meet online, participants can participate even while traveling. To join or find out more information, please contact one of our facilitators: Jane Cornman (207-944-5534 / jcornman@northernlight.org) or Linda Hopkins (207-400-8714 / hopkinsl@northernlight.org).

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Calendar

Presque Isle Area Grief Support

Grief Support Groups will be starting again in September. These six week Grief Support Groups will once again be offered in all areas of The County based on interest. We require a minimum of five participants in an area to hold a Grief Support Group and each group is limited to twelve participants.

Please contact George McLaughlin, Bereavement Coordinator for Northern Light Home Care and Hospice at 498-9039 or by email at gmclaughlin@northernlight.org if you are interested in being a part of a group, desire more information about these groups or if you desire additional support.

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