

Grief Notes

October 2025

Managing Guilt and Regret in Grief by Jane Cornman, Bereavement Coordinator

Do any of these thoughts sound familiar to you? “If only I had...” “Why on earth didn’t I...” “How did I miss...” “I should have been the one...”

During grief, many of us struggle with guilt. It makes sense. When something as awful as the death of a loved one happens, it is natural to spend time thinking about everything that led to such an unhappy result. It is also natural to review our relationship with the deceased person and regret unresolved issues.

Sometimes our guilt is justified. We are not proud of something that clearly could have been done differently. But the funny thing about guilt in grief is that it can also be completely irrational. I have met grieving people who are truly convinced that they should have been able to read their loved one’s mind or foretell the future.

Regardless of whether our guilt is justified or not, it can make grief more complicated. How do we let go of it when the person who needs to forgive us is no longer there? A good first step is to recognize that we did the best we could, remembering that “best” is not the same as “perfect.” All humans are

imperfect and inexperienced, muddling through challenging circumstances the best we know how. We need to have some grace with ourselves.

Another helpful strategy is to look at our regrets in terms of what we learned. Although we will never be able to go back and change the past, we can make amends by determining to take the lessons we’ve learned and do better next time. This can become a way to honor the person we feel guilty about.

Self-forgiveness is an important part of grief, but it’s always harder to have grace with ourselves than it is to have grace with others. It can be helpful to imagine what someone we love - the person who died, a beloved parent or mentor, or (for people of faith) God - might say to us about our sense of guilt. They would probably be much kinder than we are being to ourselves.

A final thing to understand about guilt is that sometimes we don’t want to let go of it because it’s a way of imagining we’re in control. Life is capricious and unfair, and guilt can be a way of rewriting the story with the outcomes we would have preferred: “if only I had ... then my loved one wouldn’t have

died.” It’s sad to think that we would rather claim responsibility than accept that sometimes bad things happen for no good reason.

If you are struggling with guilt, please have grace and take good care of yourself. Find someone you can confide in – a trusted friend, a therapist or clergy, or your bereavement coordinator. Your grief has taught you that life is precious and often too short. You deserve to live the rest of yours with a healthy and resilient conscience.





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)

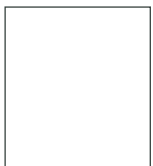
Tuesday drop-in grief support groups continue on the fourth Tuesday of the month, 2-3:30, at a local church in Bangor. The next two meetings will be on October 28 and November 25.

Online Grief Support Being Organized

We are organizing a 6-week online grief support group. Once a minimum of five participants signs up, we will find the best mutual time for all participants and schedule the meetings. The group is free of charge and open to anyone who has experienced the loss of a loved one. For more information or to register, please contact jane Cornman at 207-944-5534 or jcornman@northernlight.org.

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- Vicki Harrison



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South Portland Grief Support

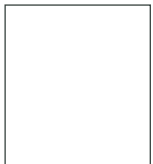
Holiday Grief Support: Holidays can be very difficult when you are grieving. Please join us for this meeting to talk about the challenges of this time of year and ideas to help you meet those challenges. This one-time meeting will be held on November 13 from 1-2:30 pm at our South Portland office at 225 Gorham Rd., 2nd floor. For more information or to register to attend, contact bereavement coordinator Linda Hopkins at 207-400-8714 or hopkinsl@northernlight.org.

Monthly Zoom Grief Support Meetings: Next meetings are on October 7 and November 4 from 1-2 pm. If you are interested in attending, contact 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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Waterville Grief Support

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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.

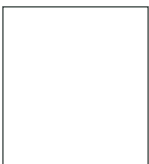
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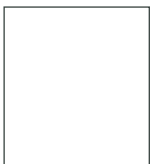
Ellsworth Area Grief Support

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.

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Presque Isle Area Grief Support

Grief and the Holidays – Healthy Ways to Grieve Well During the Holidays

In spite of what most people say, everyone does not look forward to the holidays. Having lost someone through death, you may dread this holiday season. You may wish you could just snap your fingers and it would be over. Holidays often magnify the feelings of loss of a loved one. It is important and natural to experience the sadness that you feel.

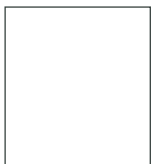
This one evening seminar on Wednesday, November 5 from 6-7pm at AR Gould Hospital will address those things that often trigger our grief but also provide helpful ideas and suggestions as you prepare for the holidays after a significant loss. This seminar is open to the public and is free of charge. You are encouraged to RSVP by Monday, November 3.

Six Week Grief Support Groups – Have you lost a loved one? When someone we love dies it can feel overwhelming. You may feel alone and that no one understands what you are going through. The truth is that many are walking a similar path. Consider coming to a place where you can talk, grieve, and move forward with people who are also grieving. Please contact George if you are interested in participating in a Grief Support Group.

As your Bereavement Coordinator, I am available by phone for grief support. If you would like to arrange a time to talk or meet one on one, you may e-mail your request to George McLaughlin at gmclaughlin@northernlight.org or call me at 207-498-9039. I will get back to you as soon as I can.

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