



GriefConnections

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School Grief Resource Program

An Angel Just for Me

By Erika www.allkidsgrieve.org

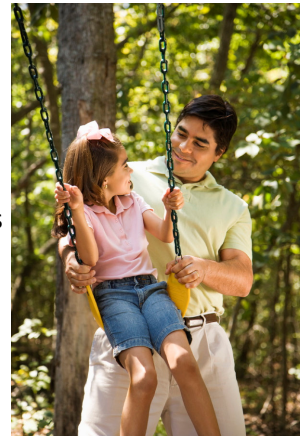
Angels walking past me
Shedding light onto my fears
Angels walking with me
Sharing the laughs and sharing the tears

Angels sent as miracles
Angels sent for love
Some angels watching over me
From somewhere up above

Angels here to guide and teach
Angels here for fun
Angels here to smooth the pain
Or just to dance into the sun

Then there is you
An angel just for me
The one that outshines the rest
The one that set me free

The one with all the answers
For my questions everyday
The one that makes me feel my best
In every single way



Southern Tier Hospice & Palliative Care is a non-profit business located in east Corning, New York. Best known for their high quality at need care for terminally ill patients, Southern Tier Hospice has many other areas of care. This past year, they introduced a brand new program specifically designed to help children and adolescents. It is called the Grief Resource Program.

Grief Resource Program Director, Andrea Barber, felt that there was a community wide need to help children through grief. Grief can come in many forms. It can be a loss through a family member or a friend dying. It can also come through dramatic life changes like divorce or job loss.

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School Resource Program con't

The Grief Resource Program was introduced to the schools in a 3 county region; Steuben, Chemung and Schuyler counties, 36 schools in total. Andrea Barber has gone into each of the schools and held training sessions in order to equip teachers and administrators with a much needed resource. The program teaches them what grief is, how children react to grief, coping skills and gives the schools resources to help the students.

Each school receives Grief Resource Program manuals. In each manual are resources like projects that can be worked on with children in order to help children work through their grief. The manual contains listings of books for each age level that are vital to helping children through grief. The Grief Resource Program contains curriculum for leading grief support groups. It contains referral information for when teachers or administrators feel that a child needs further intervention and assistance.



Andrea Barber
Program Director

Since the start of the program, Southern Tier Hospice has assisted in on-site support groups in the schools. They are involved in preventive programs specifically in the topic of suicide and grief. Southern Tier Hospice works closely with The Grief Center of the Southern Tier's Director and Bereavement Counselor, Sandi Follette. Sandi helps with preventive programs, support groups as well as works closely with families in after loss grief care.

The School Resource Program is funded solely through grants and donations. For further information regarding the School Resource Program, contact Andrea Barber at the Southern Tier Hospice and Palliative Care at 607-962-3100.

Grief and the Changing Seasons by William G. Hoy

March 20 officially marks the beginning of spring, and across North America, that date can't come soon enough! Whether the winter has been cold and snowy or simply cold and wet, most all of us are ready for winter to be over. Of course, everybody knows there is nothing magical about the third week of March; blizzards often occur in April. Keep in mind, though, that bereaved people often experience the changing seasons somewhat differently than the rest of us.

First, remember that for people in grief, the changing seasons can create additional complication in their journey. Many people already deal with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) in the winter, a scientifically-validated experience of low-level depression brought on by reduced exposure to sunlight and the other accompaniments of winter. But beyond this, winter provides more time for reflection, and many grieving people are unaccustomed to this level of introspection; depression is a predictable outcome.

Programs such as hospices and faith communities providing follow-up care to bereaved people do well to increase the number of volunteers or staff making follow-up phone calls during the colder months of the year. Older bereaved people are especially at risk for isolation during the winter when weather makes getting out more treacherous and when the usual pursuits of gardening and socializing are likely reduced. A simple phone call can spell the difference between a bereaved person feeling cared for or feeling utterly alone.

Second, don't overlook the supportive and teaching opportunities available with the changing seasons, either. Several models of bereavement use the seasons of the year as a framework for healing and growth. Through this framework, early grief might be compared to the reflective and "bleak" period of winter while the vibrancy of spring provides a metaphor of growth and new life. Summer, then, becomes the opportunity for continued growth into "maturity" in one's grief, as the bereaved person learns to live with the loss. Finally, autumn brings the cycle full circle, and as the season turns to thoughts of harvest, the bereaved person is challenged to look for others to help as he or she reinvests in life.

A similar model developed about 15 years ago in Australia, actually begins with the autumn season. I first encountered this framework when the publisher sent samples of their materials to my mentor, J. William Worden. In the supervision group for experienced therapists led by Dr. Worden, we reviewed the materials, based on his four tasks of mourning. In a paper evaluating the program's effectiveness, Dowling (2003) writes:

Grief and the Changing Seasons con't by William G. Hoy

The *Seasons for Growth* program uses the metaphor of the *seasons* as a meaningful and common language that is understood by children and adults alike. Saying "I am having a 'wintry' sort of day" makes sense. We can relate to autumn as the time where we are accepting the reality of the loss, winter as the time where we experience the pain of grief, spring as a time of adjustment and summer as a time when we reinvest emotional energy. Furthermore the imagery of the Seasons reminds that these times will come around again, and that each Season is important for our growth.

Whether you are using the Australian program or not, seasons provide an interesting metaphor for questions in group or individual counseling of bereaved people. "Some people think of the changing seasons as a picture of grief; if you were to compare your experience with loss to the seasons, in which season are you living now?" is a creative way to engage with bereaved people in telling their story on their terms.

Finally, remember that changing seasons (or unseasonable weather) can trigger reminders of the loss at times other than expected distress periods. As counselors of the bereaved, we have all learned to watch for fresh experiences of the loss around the anniversary of the death, holidays, and significant special days (like birthdays). Several years ago, however, I noticed some grieving people describing "really tough days" when there were no other apparent triggers.

In coastal southern California where much of my practice has been centered, we have generally experienced a few days of unseasonably hot weather in March or April. This change in the weather, accompanied by the hot, dry desert (Santa Ana) winds, mimicked the normal hot weather months of August and September. In turn, people whose loss anniversary was actually late summer found themselves feeling unusually down when the weather turned hot in the spring. While this has not been empirically studied by me or reported elsewhere in research so far as I am aware, I believe that an unseasonable change of the weather can "trigger" a response, making the bereaved brain sense the anniversary has arrived. Be alert to how grieving people react to unseasonable changes in weather that simply remind them of the time when their loved one died.

While no metaphor is completely accurate, the changing seasons provide a unique picture of the changes that occur in the process of adjusting to life after a loved one's death. Engaging bereaved people in describing their experiences in light of seasons, using the seasons for education and support, and being alert to the reminders the seasons themselves bring to the grieving heart, can be incredible useful tools in the hands of those who walk alongside the bereaved.

Out of the Darkness Suicide Prevention Walk

Sandi Follette of The Grief Center of the Southern Tier is organizing a Suicide Prevention Walk called "Out of the Darkness". The walk is sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. The date of the walk is September 11th at 9 am at Craig Park in Painted Post. For more information call Sandi at 607-936-9077 or email her at griefcenter@gmail.com. To sign up for the walk go to www.outofthedarkness.org

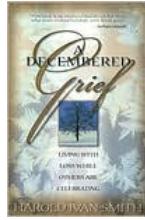
Inservice Programs for Your Organization

Did you know that we can provide an inservice speaker for your organization? Whether you are looking for a group presentation on some aspect of grief counseling or a program on today's funeral options, we have an excellent group of speakers ready to respond. To talk about options for a workshop in your organization, please call Phillips Funeral Home at 607-936-9212 or email info@phillipsfuneralhome.com.

Do you know someone who would benefit from receiving this newsletter?

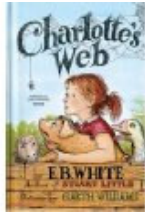
Want to receive *GriefConnections* in your email box every month—absolutely free! Simply send an email to: griefconnections@phillipsfuneralhome.com and write SUBSCRIBE TO GRIEF CONNECTIONS in the subject line.

Library Notes



A Decembered Grief: Living with Loss While Others are Celebrating written by Harold Ivan Smith. The book deals with the topic of celebrations and special occasions and how it affects the grieving individual. It gives tools to help the individual through those special times.

To purchase a copy of *A Decembered Grief*, stop in or call the Special Memories Card & Gift Shop located at Phillips Funeral Home, 17 W. Pulteney St., Corning, 607-936-9212.



Charlotte's Web, written by E.B. White. A children's book about a little girl, her prized pig Wilbur and a spider named Charlotte. *Charlotte's Web* is about friendships, love and about the cycle of life.

To purchase a copy of *Charlotte's Web*, stop in or call the Special Memories Card & Gift Shop located at Phillips Funeral Home, 17 W. Pulteney St., Corning, 607-936-9212.

Upcoming Events

Southern Tier Hospice Annual Geranium Sales

Petal Pushers Geraniums will begin on April 13th and go through May 8th. Any person or company interested in volunteering to help publicize and sell these beautiful red, pink or white geraniums can call Southern Tier Hospice & Palliative Care and sign up to be a Petal Pusher. For more information on Petal Pushers or to volunteer, please contact Paul Rossi at (607) 962-3100 or by email at prossi@sthospice.org.

Loss of a Spouse Support Group

Wednesdays at 6:30 pm at Victory Highway Wesleyan Church, 150 Victory Highway, Painted Post. For more information, contact Sandi Follette at the Grief Center of The Southern Tier at 607-936-9077.

Loss of a Loved One to Suicide

First and third Thursdays of each month at 7 pm at the Hand in Hand Methodist Church on Wardell Street, Elmira. For more information, contact Sandi Follette at The Grief Center of the Southern Tier at 607-936-9077.

Compassionate Friends Support Group

Last Wednesday of each month at 7 pm at Our Saviour Lutheran Church, 2872 Westinghouse Road, Horseheads. If you are interested in joining the group, contact Joann at 562-8090 or by email at jmorgan55@stny.rr.com.

Infant Loss

Empty Arms, Healing Hearts is a support group centered around infant loss through miscarriage. For more information, contact Victory Highway Wesleyan Church at 607-962-7000.

Abortion

Forgiven and Set Free—a post-abortion class. For more information contact Victory Highway Wesleyan Church at 607-962-7000.

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