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Most tasks can just wait. You and your grief are more important than any task or goal. Being patient with and kind to yourself, especially now, is in no way selfish. Healthy self-loving and self-care can drastically decrease stress levels and anxiety in you and in your family. The point is not to avoid grief with busy-ness or goals, but to honor grief by first giving yourself kind permission to feel what you feel without apology for as long as you need.

Letting your first New Year's goal be to grieve freely in your own way, you will know when you are ready to begin addressing other goals. A goal that some people dread, for example, is cleaning out your loved one's closet, which may seem like a daunting task both physically and emotionally. Yet when you are ready, haven given yourself permission to grieve and put it off until you are ready, such a task may help you reflect on your loved one's life,

honor your own feelings, and aid your continued healing. Also, determining to donate some of the things to charity can create an opportunity to help others in need and thus positively motivate yourself.

You may feel like you should skip the tears and jump right into your New Year's list of goals. You may feel that you have to "be strong" for the sake of other family members. But there is strength and healing in tears that is too precious to be missed, and to suppress tears can rob you of your own grief process—and your family's too!

Being true to your grief process, whether it be crying or something else, can be extremely helpful for you and your family at the beginning of this new year. Holding back and refusing yourself time to openly grieve can create even more anxiety. Everyone grieves in his own way, and it is important to let yourself grieve *your* way and not to judge others who may grieve differently.

You may think that crying in front of family members will make you seem weak, vulnerable, or even "crazy." You may be afraid that if you cry it will upset them or make them worry about you. A voice in your head may use words like "should" and "ought" and "have to." It may try to tell you that "you should be strong," "you ought be over this by now," and "you have to stop grieving now and get on with life." But your tears can actually show family members that it is ok to be sad and it is ok to be vulnerable. Giving yourself permission to cry can also give others permission to cry. It can strengthen the bond between other family members and it can bring you together as a family to grieve the loss of your loved one. When there is a loss in the family, everyone is grieving. The only question is whether you grieve alone or together.

A new year will no doubt bring new experiences, new relationships, and new memories. Honoring the one you have lost, honoring your own grief, and honoring continuing relationships of ongoing support are ways of honoring the new you in this new year.



Article by Sara Carter, HGH's Marriage and Family Therapist Intern providing emotional support and grief counseling for our patients and their families

Medicine and Spirituality by Laura Landro

In a health crisis, patients and families may turn to a member of the hospital staff who offers help beyond the physical aspects of medical treatment: the chaplain.

With growing recognition of the role of spirituality in health care, hospital chaplains are being called on to help patients cope with fear and pain, make difficult end-of-life decisions and guide families through bereavement after a loss. They may help sick or dying patients reconnect with estranged family members. New guidelines call for chaplains to be included on teams of doctors and nurses who provide palliative care—which specializes in relieving the pain, symptoms and stress of serious illness. And chaplains often step in to help clinicians deal with their own feelings of stress and burn-out.

Nearly 70% of community hospitals surveyed in 2011 provided chaplaincy services, up from 62% in 2003, according to the American Hospital Association.

"Now seems to be the time for spirituality to come along in health care, as everyone recog-

nizes we are all body, mind and spirit," says the Rev. Eric Hall, a Presbyterian minister and the group's chief executive officer. "At times of difficulty, the chaplain is an incredible resource to engage and guide and direct."

Chaplains are typically board-certified by one of several professional associations following at least 1,600 hours of education. While they may come from different religious affiliations, they are able to minister to all faiths—or to those who don't have a specific religion but feel the need for spiritual guidance or discussion, Mr. Hall says.

A Pew Research poll last year found that the number of Americans who don't identify with any religion increased to nearly 20% of all adults from 15% five years earlier. Yet Pew also found that many of the country's 46 million unaffiliated adults are religious or spiritual in some way, with two-thirds saying they believe in God and more than a third classifying themselves as spiritual but not religious.

Wendy Cadge, a sociology professor at Brandeis University says she has

seen nurses in intensive-care units pray for patients, or respiratory therapists say a prayer when they must remove a breathing tube, in the presence of family. But chaplains "define healing in a much broader, more holistic way than other members of the health-care team," her research found, and they almost universally believe they can best facilitate healing by helping patients tap their inner resources, rather than by calling on a higher power to intervene in their outcome.

Sister Gallivan, a Roman Catholic nun who has a master of divinity degree and a Ph.D in pastoral psychology, says chaplains are a crucial part of the movement known as patient-and family-centered care. "Everyone else has a task in health care, and our job is to listen," she says. "A lot of what we provide is emotional support, even if we do nothing but sit with someone for presence and companionship."

Ms. Landro is a Wall Street Journal assistant managing editor and writes the Informed Patient column. This article from the December 8, 2013 WSJ was abbreviated.

Our Harbor Grace Hospice Chaplains:



Inpatient Unit Chaplain Zeena Regis



Home Care Chaplain Bert Gary



Bereavement Coordinator Rachel Randall



A safe harbor in your time of need

Harbor Grace Hospice
Corporate Office
500 Lanier Ave. W., Suite 401
Fayetteville, GA 30214
Phone: (678) 962-5850

Harbor Grace Hospice
Inpatient Unit
320 Parkway Dr., 4th Floor
Atlanta, GA 30312
Phone: (404) 941-1700
Fax: (404) 941-1711

License 056-242-H

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www.harborgracehospice.com

The Two Rings -A Volunteer Story

After being a hospice volunteer for over ten years, I recently had one of my most amazing volunteer experiences. As you know, most women love to shop and my mission was to meet up at the mall with a wheelchair-bound patient to purchase two identical sapphire rings for her granddaughters. "Linda" wanted to surprise her daughter as well as her granddaughters on their wedding days—they are only in elementary school presently.

Upon meeting this wonderful 67 year-old woman, I learned early on that she was one special lady. Linda said, "I just want to

make it easy for everyone." She repeated this several times, not from dementia, but she truly didn't want to burden her family. I remember thinking, wow—here she is dying, yet thinking of everyone else and I get to be a part of this.

We went to six stores, and at the last one we found the perfect ring. Putting the ring on her finger, she knew the ring would glisten and sparkle on the girls hands when they walked down the aisle.

Guess what she wanted to buy next? Wedding cards to accompany the rings for her granddaugh-

ters on their wedding day, can you believe it? I chuckled and again thought about how blessed I was to be a part of this. When she found the cards she wanted she said, "Perfect! We are cooking, just like Crisco." Oh how we laughed!

Mission accomplished, Linda said we made a good team and maybe we could go shopping together again. Believe me, I'll beat you to that volunteer request. As I hugged her goodbye, Linda thanked me, tears welling up in her eyes and in mine.

Volunteer Mary Dunham

CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers are vital to the work of hospice.

Perhaps you have a specific skill to offer, or perhaps you can be someone's friend in a difficult time.

Is there space in your heart and your life for this kind of work?

If more than a year has passed since your loss, and if hospice was helpful to your family, consider volunteering with Harbor Grace Hospice.

You may call Rachel Randall at 404-941-1742 at any time to investigate whether this is a good option for you.