



# Touch Base Newsletter

June, 2021

## Lisa's Message

I feel that, as the hours of light grow each day, so does our hope that the most challenging aspects of the pandemic are behind us.

These past months have left us with many losses—lost time with family and friends, missed opportunities to mark significant milestones, such as gathering together with loved ones to honour the lives of people that have died. The rituals surrounding death and dying have either not been held at all or have been significantly restricted, and many people are struggling to process this extra grief and loss.

Supporting our community with their losses and their grief is an important aspect of hospice palliative care and we are happy to announce that we will be hosting our Annual Memorial Butterfly Release Sunday July 25th. We have modified the event to have a virtual memorial ceremony that will be shared online to accompany your own in person release of the butterflies you pick up at one of four safe locations—Killaloe, Barry's Bay, Combermere and Madawaska.

Each family can choose the butterfly ritual which suits them best: they may decide to watch the 30 minute online ceremony and release their butterflies at a special place of their choosing or they may decide to create their own ceremony to reflect the person they are honouring. Dawn Cruchet will be the guest speaker on the pre-recorded video, along with a message from our new Clinical Director, Dylaina Wood, and local musicians will be playing some special selections of music.

This annual signature event is our major fundraiser to provide the necessary funds for our programs. We will begin advertising this event June 9th through newspapers, social media, mail-outs, and email. We will send an email to our volunteer group with all the important details. We ask that you share this information with your contacts to help us maximize the dollars raised, and to reach as many people as possible who can benefit from the butterfly release.

Please emphasize that butterflies must be reserved by July 9th as it takes time to raise them for our event later that month. The cost to reserve is \$35 each or 3 butterflies for \$100. *Butterflies can be ordered online at [www.sfvhfoundation.com](http://www.sfvhfoundation.com) or by calling the foundation at 613-756-3045 Extension 217.*

Your help is always appreciated and as a team, we continue to provide our community with compassionate support when they are the most vulnerable. The Memorial Butterfly Release has never been more important than after this pandemic year. With your help, it could be our biggest to date.

As always, please continue to be ambassadors and advocates for hospice palliative care, so that all families facing end of life, grief and loss will always have the supports they need. *Lisa*

***"We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own."*** B Sweetland

## Things to remember when supporting a grieving person

### **Be genuine by being yourself.**

Your connection with the bereaved person should be a continuation of your usual relationship with them. If you are a close friend, they will want and expect caring contact from you. A bereaved person will not want anyone to assume an unfamiliar intimacy now. Your sensitivity and dependability can make a difference to how understood and supported they feel.

### **Acknowledge the loss as soon as you can after you get the news.**

Send a sympathy card with a note of personal condolence. Don't let fear that you won't say or do the right thing hold you back from talking with the bereaved person. Simply say that you are sorry to hear of the death, mention the person by name, be willing to listen to what the bereaved person may say. Ask how you can be helpful, offer some assistance in a way that feels comfortable for you.

### **Get good information about grief so that you understand the normal responses and phases of grief.**

Grief is a natural and necessary process that helps the bereaved person adjust to life without the person who died.

### **Be willing to open the subject and to mention the name of the person who died.**

Rather than filling conversation with other topics, let the bereaved person talk with you about the death and their

feelings. If there are silences, let these be shared moments of quiet without rushing into the gap.

### **Listen to the bereaved person.**

Allowing them to talk and to repeat their story will help them to process their thoughts and feelings. Sharing memories of times spent with the person who died can be very comforting for you and the bereaved person.

### **Accept that you cannot take the pain away .**

The death of someone important is painful. Trying to 'cheer up' a bereaved person denies the significance and depth of their grief. You can help by allowing the expression of feelings – guilt, sorrow, anger, sadness – without judgement. These feelings are healthy and normal aspects of grief.

### **Reach out to offer support.**

Be there by making regular contact over time. Many bereaved people find it hard to reach out or are concerned about being a burden on friends and family. Your initiative in keeping in touch will be appreciated.

### **Be patient .**

Mourning takes lots of time and grief never entirely goes away. The bereaved person will have ups and downs as they move through their grief. Be flexible in how you offer support as the needs of the bereaved person will change with the grief process.

### **Understand that everyone grieves in their own way and at their own pace.**

How a person grieves is a result of their personality, their past history of loss and the relationship that they had with the person who died. Accept the bereaved person's evaluation of the significance of the loss and the depth of their feelings.

### **Remember that there is no right way to grieve.**

Avoid criticizing how someone is grieving; you cannot know what is best for them. Most often a person's strengths, coping mechanisms and network of family, friends and acquaintances are sufficient to sustain them through their grief. However, if you are concerned, encourage them to take care of themselves by getting help also from their minister, doctor, or a counsellor.

### **Expect that your own grief may be triggered.**

These feelings may be related to this loss or to a loss that happened in your own past. You may want to share things that have been helpful to you when you were grieving. Be sensitive in how and when you share suggestions or your own feelings. Ask yourself: Does the bereaved person want to know, will it feel helpful to them now?



## *Dylaina Shares a Butterfly Release Memory*



My first butterfly release was not what I expected at all. I expected when we opened our butterfly packages, the butterflies would fly free as we exclaimed in wonder over them soaring around us. That is not what happened. Not at all. Some butterflies did fly, and some didn't even move, others fell to the grass when they tried to fly. It was a bit anticlimactic to say the least. However, as I reflected on the moment, this experience of watching the butterflies struggling to find their way in a new environment was for me a reflection on living with my grief. My initial butterfly release was not what I expected, it ended up being much more.

After a beautiful ceremony, we were instructed to open the packages that contained the butterflies. When we opened our package, our butterfly just sat there for a few moments almost stunned, or so it seemed. Then, slowly he raised his wings towards the sky, and with slow deliberate movements, he opened and closed them and stretched his legs ("he" as he was purchased in memory of my father-in-law that year). When I think back it seemed like the butterfly was feeling every part of his body for the first time, taking time to get to know himself. In a way it was his awakening. I think that in grief, even our own bodies can feel foreign. We may look the same, but we have taken on the challenge of adapting to a world we no longer know and understand. The process is slow and deliberate, and we should take all the time we need.

While handing out the butterfly packages, the volunteer told us that the butterflies might take a little while to wake up. In those first moments after opening our package I wondered what it was like for the butterfly to be suddenly exposed to a new world, to feel and smell the air of a new and unfamiliar place. To take in the new sights. He probably felt disoriented and confused, displaced and lost. One moment he was in a place he knew — whether a good or bad place, there is comfort in the knowledge of the familiar. Now, he was waking up to a new and uncertain reality. And he did not get a choice in this new reality. For me grief is like that. Losing someone you love is like waking up, disoriented, in a new and unfamiliar place.

As our butterfly attempted his first flight he fluttered into the grass before he got too far. I expected him to fly. I wanted him to fly. I think society has this same expectation after a major loss — that we quickly pick ourselves up, not stumble and sometime fall—and realized that I had the same expectation of our butterfly. I followed our butterfly as he flew around the park, landing frequently to reorient himself. I sat next to him, and let the uncertainty we had woken up to settle in. In that moment, I decided to give myself and the butterfly grace to just sit and be for as long as needed. It was an experience I will never forget, powerful and moving and a true beginning to my healing.

## *Virtual Memorial Butterfly Release 2021*



*Save The Date!*

**July 25th, 2021**

Virtual Memorial Butterfly Release 2021

Release a live butterfly from your own special location.

Details to follow soon.



## June is Seniors Month



June is Seniors Month and we want to extend a huge *Thank You* to all our senior volunteers. Our program is greatly enriched by your combined wisdom, varied skills, and vast knowledge that you willingly share with the people you assist and, also, with the staff and board of MVHPC.

## Volunteer Debrief and Touch Base

We have been incredibly steady, especially in the Hospice unit, and feel it is time to invite volunteers to come together for an opportunity to share and debrief about your experiences. Some of our families have been with us for a longer time frame and we know it complicates our feelings when they die as we have formed attachments and friendships. If you feel you would be interested in attending, please reach out to Michele and when we know the level of interest, we will reach out with a safe space option based on the people wishing to attend. Your well-being is important and please take advantage of this self care.

## In Praise of MV Hospice Volunteers

"Please ensure all those wonderful volunteers know how important each and every one of them was to me and my family. When I needed to talk they were the best listeners and even though sometimes we didn't need them very much, I was so comforted knowing they were there for me and my sons. They are all such amazing people."  
*McLean Family*

"We are grateful for Mom having been able to spend her final chapter in the hospice. The surroundings were heart-warming and we were so fortunate to be able to be there with Mom, in spite of covid. Everyone there...so loving! It really was the best experience Mom could have had in her final days. Thank you for all you've done and to everyone there. Whether it's any of you in the office, the PSW's, housekeeping staff, volunteers, RNs, RPNs, everyone...completely incredible! We are so grateful. Can't thank you enough."  
*Hudder Family*

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"We want to express our deepest thanks to everyone (staff, volunteers, PSW's) for what you provided to mom. We never saw her in so much peace. Everyone showed such compassion for our mom and it was a real blessing to her and to us. I have recommended all your services to everyone I talk to."  
*E.F.*

### Year End Statistics—Congrats!

In our last fiscal year 2020-21 ending March 31, we served more people in all our categories, even during a pandemic, and volunteers gifted our community with more service hours than the year previous. Way to go team!