

March 2004

# GOOD GRIEF



ST. JOHN HOSPICE

A Newsletter For and About Grief Support

## Dear Hospice Friends and Families,

I hope this letter finds you progressing toward recovery. We at St John Hospice are committed to helping you and your family. Many people ask, "Will I ever feel happy again?" I believe you will, though it may take time. I have included an article in this newsletter that addresses the issue of happiness. I trust you will find it helpful.



As always, we have grief support groups that are here to help and support you through the process of grieving. Also, please don't hesitate to call us if you are having a difficult time or just have a question.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael N. Chapman".

Michael Chapman, MA, TLLP

Bereavement Coordinator

St. John Hospice

586-723-9590

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## Announcing Grief Support at Providence Hospital

In addition to our three groups already in progress, a new group is beginning at Providence Hospital in April. This group will meet on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month. On the 2nd Thursday it will meet in the evening from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. and on the 4th Thursday it will meet in the afternoon from 10:00 a.m. - Noon. (Please see the calendar enclosed). Please call us for more information, directions, or to register for the group. 586-723-9590

## Volunteer Opportunities

In recovering from grief, many people find it therapeutic to help others in similar circumstances. St John Hospice offers many opportunities to volunteer and invest your energy in helping others. Being a volunteer gives a great sense of purpose and satisfaction. Volunteers with St. John Hospice perform a variety of activities for patients. Areas of volunteer support may include:

- Serving as a patient companion and providing caregiver relief.
- Providing light housekeeping, meal preparation, shopping or other errands.
- Offering bereavement care by making phone calls, participating

in support groups, or making home visits.

- Providing office assistance and support.

All interested volunteers are provided with training. If you are interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities with St. John Hospice, please call our volunteer manager at 800-248-2298.

## Memorial Donations

Memorial donations are a great way to honor the memory of your loved one. They help to provide continued, quality, compassionate care to families of terminally ill patients. Donations in memory of your loved one may be made to St. John Hospice. Please send your donation to St John Hospice 37650 Garfield, Clinton Twp, MI 48036. Or call us for a donation envelope at 586-723-9590. Thank You.

## Am I Equipped for Happiness?

*by Russell Friedman & John W. James of The Grief Recovery Institute*

In the previous article "Less Than Loved Ones - -Hopes and Dreams" we touched upon the idea that griever develop a relationship to their pain, as if their identity hinged on regarding themselves as unhappy. Many people

become so familiar with those painful feelings that they are afraid to let them go. If it were not so sad, and if it did not have such dire consequences, one would be tempted to draw a cartoon of someone clinging desperately to a horrible looking creature called "pain," terrified of losing it. And yet, that is exactly what it looks like.

Some of us have very long-term relationships to pain. We may have unresolved "loss-of-trust" experiences from childhood that keep us in an almost perpetual state of acceptance of pain as a permanent condition. Many of us keep dragging the unfinished relationships of our past into all of our new relationships, and then acting surprised when they always end the same. We may be ill-equipped to deal with the feelings caused by the end of each new relationship, and we may be unaware that almost all of our past relationships are incomplete or unresolved.

Some of us are able to acknowledge that we have sabotaged many relationships. While we have the intellectual awareness that we are the common denominator in the sabotages, we find ourselves unable to change our behavior. If the intellect were the key to successful recovery then we would be able to think ourselves well. We would be able to understand ourselves into better actions. Clearly that does not work. Unresolved grief is cumulative and cumulatively negative.

Incomplete relationships create unresolved grief, and... Unresolved grief creates incomplete relationships.

## Am I Equipped for Happiness ...continued

Incomplete relationships can cause us to limit our lives, can induce us to sabotage good relationships, can encourage us to keep choosing poorly. Unresolved grief becomes a relationship to ourselves as unworthy of happiness. We must learn how to grieve and complete relationships that have ended or changed. It may sound simple, and it is simple. Why then, do so many people resist taking the simple and clearly defined actions of Grief Recovery®? The opening paragraph of this article referred to how familiar we become with our pain. Familiarity can create a powerful illusion that change is not necessary, that growth is not possible, and that where happiness is concerned, 20% equals 100%.

“Am I equipped for happiness?” Yes, but I am much more familiar with pain. As the direct result of years and years of practice, I am expert at identifying and relating to pain. Happiness is an unwelcome intruder in how I relate to myself. We have all searched desperately for the key to happiness. While it may sound simplistic to say that we held the key, ourselves, all along, it is true. Access to our own happiness is directly linked to our ability to grieve and complete our relationships with people and events, as well as our ability to grieve and complete our relationship to the pain we generate when we are reminded of the unhap-

piness we have experienced in our lives.

Many of us say, over and over, that if only this or that would happen I could be happy. The thing might be love or money or success or fame. And yet, how often do we get the very thing we wanted and wind up as unhappy as we were before, and even more disillusioned? To rediscover your ability to be happy, you must go back and grieve and complete all of the incomplete relationships from your past. As you do so, you will begin to find your normal and natural desire and ability to be happy. You may have heard people talk about stripping away the layers of an onion; we prefer the analogy of stripping away the leaves of an artichoke, and discovering your heart inside.

**QUESTION: I have had many painful loss experiences in my life. Sometimes I feel as if there is no way I can ever let down my guard and allow**

**any positive or happy experiences in. Will Grief Recovery® principles help me change this fearful habit?**

**ANSWER:** In clearly identifying your behavior as a habit, you increase the probability of growth and change. The idea of changing a habit is probably less intimidating than the idea of changing a behavior. In truth, most of our behaviors are habits that we have practiced so well and so often that they seem like our nature. Many of our survival habits were developed when we were quite young. Often we are managing an adult life with the limited skills and perceptions of a small child. As we grieve and complete the events and behaviors of our pasts, we become open to our ability to be happy.

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*Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers  
but to be fearless in facing them  
Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain  
but for the heart to conquer it*

# GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

St. John Hospice provides support groups for surviving caregivers and family members who have lost a loved one. The groups are free and open to the public. For more information or to register for one of the groups please call 586-723-9590.

## CLINTON TOWNSHIP GROUP

Grief Support Group  
37650 Garfield  
(On Garfield just north of Metro Parkway (16 mile)  
Clinton Township, MI 48038  
586-723-9590

Meets the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month; 2-3:30 p.m.  
Group Leader: Rev Michael Chapman, MA, TLLP  
Bereavement Coordinator

## ROSEVILLE GROUP

G.O.A.L. (Going On After Loss)  
18303 E. Ten Mile Road, Suite 300  
(On 10 Mile between Kelly and Gratiot in the  
Pointe East Office Center. Last building on the left)  
Roseville, MI 48066  
586-723-9590

Meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month from 2-3:30 p.m.  
Group Leader: Jamie Flowers, MA, Spiritual Care Counselor

## RICHMOND GROUP

Learning to Live with Loss and Change  
Grief Support Group  
St Augustine Parish Educational Building  
68035 Main St.  
Richmond, MI  
586-727-5215 ext.13

Meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month from 6:30-8 p.m.  
Group Leader: Sally Sutley, MSW  
Medical Social Worker

## PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL

Meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month  
2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday meets from 4-6 p.m.  
4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday meets from 10 a.m. - Noon

Group Leader: Rev. Andre Carr Spiritual Care Counselor

