

# Haven Herald

*Grief never ends.  
But it changes.*

*It's a passage,  
Not a place to stay.*

*The sense of loss  
Must give way  
If we're to value  
The life that was lived.*

*Grief is not a sign of weakness,  
Nor lack of faith.  
It is the price of love.*



## Letter from the Executive Director

The season of summer is, for most people, a time to shift gears and slow down a little. The summer truly offers the gift of time with its longer days and less hectic schedules. At Haven we are finishing up our spring groups and planning a workshop for men in grief and a summer workshop, "Journey through Grief," which is an overview of the grief process and the various types of losses. If you have suffered a loss, summer gives you space to just "be" with your grief. Loss and grief have no timeline, and you may have to put your grief on hold for awhile depending on what was going on in your life at the time of the loss. Summer, perhaps more than any other season, allows us an opportunity to linger for a time with our thoughts and emotions.

No matter what the circumstances of the loss were, finding ways to cope can be an important part of the healing process. This can take time and energy. You may decide to read a book on grief, do some journaling, or re-connect with a family member or friend during the months of summer. Giving yourself these opportunities and finding room in your life for meaningful experiences can make all the difference in how you walk through your grief.

Loss brings new realizations and significant changes for most people, so it is important not to rush the grief process but to go through it at your own pace. Grief is as individual as the person experiencing it, so make it your own and find the time for what is important to you.

Jill Bellacicco



## Helping Others Grieve Do's and Don'ts

### DON'T:

Minimize their pain  
 Avoid talking about it  
 Tell them not to think about it  
 Tell them you know exactly how they feel  
 Give them advice  
 Quote meaningless platitudes;  
     e.g., "time heals all wounds"  
 Stifle or minimize their feelings  
 Tell them about your own losses at length  
 Feel as if you have to make sense of their loss for them  
 Feel as if there are right words to say  
 Try to make them feel better

### DO:

Be there for them...your presence is supportive  
 Try to understand their feelings  
 Listen to their concerns  
 Allow them to tell and retell their experience  
 Use correct words like died and dead  
 Spend time just being with them  
 Learn about the grief process  
 Remember they are the experts on their grief  
 Just listening is extremely helpful  
 Let them know that no topic is off limits to you  
 Remind them of their strengths and good qualities  
 Just be a friend to them – sharing times of sorrow and joy

Prepared by Annemarie Bezold, LCSW

## What Worked For Me by Don Shaw

It's been just 20 months since I lost my wife and life partner of 44 years to cancer. To say that this period has been the most difficult of my life would be an understatement. But I feel that my emotional state has begun to stabilize. Now I have longer and longer stretches of time when I feel more "normal," where life is not driven by grief.

Thinking over these past 20 months and what has been important in my grieving process, many things come to mind. Having my two sons and their families close by is significant. We spent a lot of time together and continue to do so. They have been my emotional anchors.

My Catholic faith has been a pillar of strength. Right after Cissie died, I began attending the daily morning Mass four or five times a week. This was a time when I talked to God and Cissie. It was a time for meditation about where I was at the moment and about facing my grief. It was a good way to start each day. My church and the many friends I made there also served as a source of support and strength.

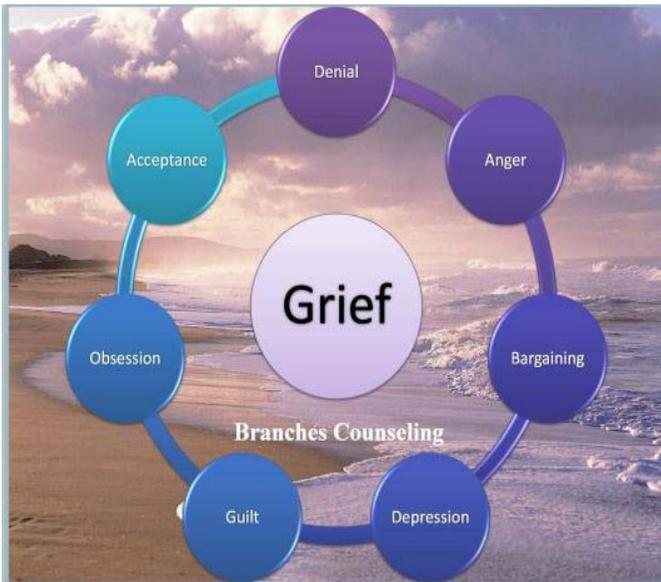
A next-door neighbor, Diane, whom we did not know well, came to visit right after Cissie died to express her condolences and ask how I was doing. And she brought a plate of food. She stayed just long enough to express genuine interest and concern for me and how I was doing. For the next 20 months, she continued to make short visits and bring food. Such acts of kindness over this period have meant a lot to me.

I have learned to allow other people to help me when they take the difficult step of reaching out. I discovered that a lot of kindness is out there if I just make myself open to it.

I have always had a controlling approach to life. Work hard and you can make things happen. I learned that I control very little and know a lot less about life than I thought. A couple of my favorite sayings fit here: "The beginning of wisdom is the recognition that you know very little" (Socrates), and "If you want to make God laugh, plan your life." I have learned to take each day as it comes with an open heart and let it unfold without trying to direct it or force it into my agenda.



## COMMON REACTIONS TO GRIEF



One of the many disturbing aspects of grieving is experiencing a variety of unexpected or seemingly uncontrollable emotions and/or physical sensations. Often individuals who mourn fear that they “are going crazy” or somehow [are] “abnormal” in how they are responding to their loss. It is important for the bereaved to have others validate or normalize these reactions to grief. The following list includes many of the normal responses to the death of a loved one:

1. Spontaneous crying, often at times where there is no apparent trigger. Individuals sometimes are frightened by the unpredictability of tears.
2. Mood swings, where a person’s feelings change very quickly. Feelings may range from intense sadness to guilt to anger to numbness. Some of the guilt may be related to feeling angry with the person who has died for leaving.
3. Disbelief and denial of the loss. Awakening and expecting the person who died to be alive; hearing his or her voice or briefly seeing his or her face; sensing his or her presence.
4. Difficulty with concentration and memory. Bereaved may not be able to concentrate on reading material; may lose his or her train of thought in the middle of a sentence; may walk into a room and forget why; may lose things or forget appointments. This response seems especially surprising to grieving persons.
5. Physical reactions may include tightness in throat or heaviness in the chest; an empty or nauseated feeling in the stomach; lack of desire to eat; difficulty sleeping or awakening very early without being able to go back to sleep; dreams about the loved one; lack of energy, fatigue.
6. Experience as intense preoccupation with the life of the person who has died, including the need to talk about the loved one and the story of his or her illness and death; assuming the person’s mannerisms or traits.
7. Feel awkwardness with others, not knowing what to say in response to: *How are you?* and feeling uncertain as to whether others are interested in the person’s grief. Feeling isolated and uncomfortable in social situations where everyone is expected to be happy and celebrating.
8. Need to review the last days, months or years of the life of the person who has died to try to determine if things should have been done or said differently; trying to understand the “why’s” or “should haves” and feeling some guilt at not having done more.

Prepared by Capital Hospice



### HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED

Haven is classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is funded mainly by donations from individuals in the community who wish to support our work and by those who donate in memory of a loved one. Donations are tax deductible. If you are interested in making a donation, please contact Haven at (703) 941-7000 or at [havenofnova@verizon.net](mailto:havenofnova@verizon.net)

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## **Summer Schedule**

Grief Workshop for Men Only  
Saturday, June 22, 2013  
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Teen Bereavement Workshop  
Wednesday, June 26, 2013  
7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

“Journey through Grief” Workshop  
Saturday, July 13, 2013  
2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Call for reservation for the workshops.

Drop-in Suicide Loss Support Group  
1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month  
11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

*Haven also offers individual support by phone and in person; please call to schedule an appointment. For immediate support without an appointment, a volunteer is available on a walk-in basis Monday through Friday between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.*

## **Contact Information**

Haven of Northern Virginia  
4606 Ravensworth Road  
Annandale, Virginia 22003  
Phone: (703) 941-7000  
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## **Hours of Operation**

Monday through Friday  
9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
[www.havenofnova.org](http://www.havenofnova.org)

Messages may be left on our  
voicemail after hours