

Haven Herald

You Are Not Alone



Support Groups and Workshops

How Haven Can Help

by Janice Moody

When a person loses a loved one, there is often a need to reach out to someone to talk to and share their grief. This can be a family member or friend. In addition to individual support, people find joining a group can bring a sense of normalcy to the loss. We discover that our thoughts, our feelings, and our sense of a future are often the same as those of others.

Here at Haven of Northern Virginia the staff of volunteers have been busy developing workshops and support groups for specific losses. We continue to adapt and modify these to fit the needs of our participants. We offer both one-day workshops and two-hour presentations on grief. Meeting here in house provides a cozy, safe and friendly environment.

We are holding one-day workshops for parent loss, sibling loss and suicide loss.

A Widow/Widower/Partner Support Group is held over the course of four Saturdays. The second Saturday of each month our in-person Suicide Loss Support Group welcomes clients to talk about their suicide loss. Zoom Suicide Support Group is held on the first and third Saturday of each month.

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Letter from the Executive Director

Summer has arrived with all its warmth and sunshine, the season that can bring a break from the routine of daily living. Haven slows down in summer as we plan for a busier fall. When I was a child, I always looked forward to summer. It was a time when my family went on vacation and I enjoyed the freedom to have my own adventures without the responsibilities of school and schedules. I cherish the memories of those childhood summers.

The heaviness of grief can make the summer season a very sad time. I became especially aware of this after my mother died. She died in late April and the summer after was difficult. I found support from others who just listened to me and made space for my grief.

The topic of this newsletter is how groups and workshops can be a helpful after a loss. Over the years Haven has offered many workshops and groups that deal with the various losses people experience. It can be very healing to know that grief is a shared experience and we can help each other through it, but it is also individual. There can be many common threads that people relate to, but I have found the most significant aspect of grief is the yearning to have that person in the world again. I know I would give anything to hear my mother's voice and see her smile.

Jill Bellacicco

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Many of the participants in these support groups and workshops have found common ground and stay in touch with each other after the session. Friendships have developed based on common experiences. As Julian Barnes stated in his book, *Levels of Life*, after the loss of his wife: "Only we know what we know." Several of our volunteers have come from people who attended one of the group sessions. They have found a place where they can pay it forward by helping others who have had to deal with the loss of a loved one.

What Worked For Me by Stephanie Miller

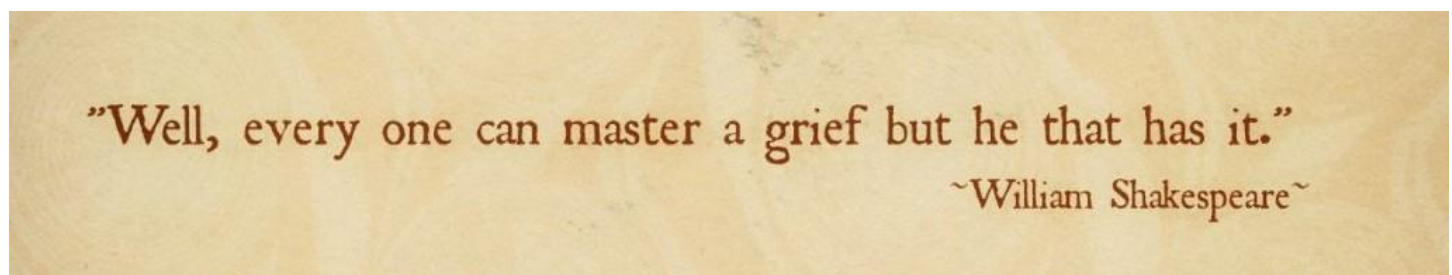
In January 2017, my partner of five years died. Like so many others who may be reading this newsletter, that day rocked the foundations of my world. It took some time and a not-insignificant amount of therapy before I was ready to go to a support group. My therapist at the time suggested Haven and forwarded me a flier with the contact information. Fast-forward to October 2018 and I attended Haven's Grief Group for widows, widowers and partners.

Support is everything. The women who were in my same support group are emblematic of its importance. At its core, the group helped keep me on my feet and figure out how to move forward in a way not even my therapist really could. They understood the kind of loss I was untangling despite the differences of our individual circumstances. There are things about losing my partner that everyone else directly affected by his loss couldn't understand because of their relationship to him (sibling, cousin, etc.). This group, these women, could and did because they were in similar places and that continues to help me through the bad days when they happen.

Grieving is not a race and its progress cannot be measured with any milestones. It's all a great big ball of wibbly-wobbly emotionally tumultuous...stuff (there's a handout of this too!). Both at the time and now, no one from our group pushed anyone else to move faster than we were able. They helped me listen to my inner voice telling me it would be okay. I could ignore those people telling us we should not sit in our grief, that it should be something we get over. Being with people telling me to move at my own speed allowed me to do just that and to learn how to response to family, friends and colleagues.

Time is only a measure of distance between loss and today. It's not the measure of either how the heart is mending or how to live after loss.

I'm thankful for everyone I met through the support group. Haven and the group provided me a safe place where I didn't feel the need to hide or minimize how I felt. That helped more than I can put into words.



"Well, every one can master a grief but he that has it."

~William Shakespeare~

Benefits of Attending Support Groups

Grief support groups come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Sometimes they are specific to a type of loss or tragedy. They can be less specific, as well. Sometimes sessions are led by a licensed therapist or counselor, or by a religious leader. Sometimes a trained volunteer leads the group. Regardless, the loss of a loved one is the shared experience that brings the group together. Here are five benefits of a grief support group:

1. **Provides Hope**

Grief is a journey, with detours and straightaways, starts and stops. While no two experiences are the same, there is a shared experience of loss. Gathering in a group allows people who are early in their journey to connect with those who are much further along. Meeting with and talking to others who have experienced a similar loss shows that it's possible to feel joy again. For those further along in their healing process, sharing such reassurance can provide important affirmation to themselves, and confirm that the group is a helpful resource for others.

2. **You are not alone.**

Perhaps the biggest benefit of a grief support group is the reminder that you are not alone. Grieving can be terribly lonely and isolating, especially when everyone around you seems to be “getting on with their lives.” By attending a support group for the death of a parent, you may find that other people have experiences, feelings and struggles that are similar to your own. When your grief is overwhelming, the support group community says, “We’ve been there. We understand you.” This is a powerful statement at a critical time.

3. **A Different Perspective**

As we mentioned above – and cannot reiterate enough – *no two grieving journeys are the same*. However, those who have experienced a similar loss may have valuable advice and suggestions, critical insights, or a different outlook to share. By listening and learning, you may come away with some useful perspectives to help you move along on your grief journey.

4. **Giving Back**

Giving back to others grounds people with a sense of purpose and meaning. This altruism can serve as a helpful tool in the healing process. When you participate in a support group for the death of a spouse, you’ll receive advice, but you also share your story and inspire others, too. Often we don’t realize how far along on our own journey we truly are until we guide and support someone on her or his journey.

5. **A Sense of Belonging**

We, as humans, have an innate need to belong, to be part of a tribe or group. This survival instinct has served us well for thousands of years. Indeed, studies show that a sense of belonging can contribute to our overall happiness. Following a loss, you may feel alone or left out, and different than others because of your grief. Finding a group that understands and accepts you can be an important step in your healing. No one wants to be in the grief club, but once you’re in the club, you may find comfort in surrounding yourself with other members.



by: Danielle Shaffstall
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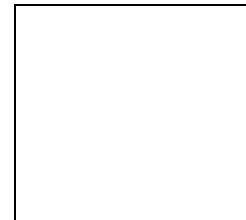
HOW HAVEN IS FUNDED

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

Haven of Northern Virginia, Inc.

4606 Ravensworth Road

Annandale, Virginia 22003



Summer Schedule

Parent Loss Workshop

Saturday, July 20, 2024 * 10:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

"Journey through Grief"

Saturday, August 10, 2024 * 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Four-week Widow/Widower/Partner Support Group

Forming in September, 2024

Space is limited. Registration is required for workshops and group.
Please call or email Haven to register.

ZOOM Suicide Loss Support Group

1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month

11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

In-person drop-in Suicide Loss Support Group

2nd Saturdays of each month

11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Contact Information

Haven of Northern Virginia

4606 Ravensworth Road

Annandale, Virginia 22003

Phone: (703) 941-7000

Fax: (703) 941-7003

E-mail: havenofnova@verizon.net

Hours of Operation

Monday through Friday

9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

www.havenofnova.org

Messages may be left on our
voicemail after hours

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.