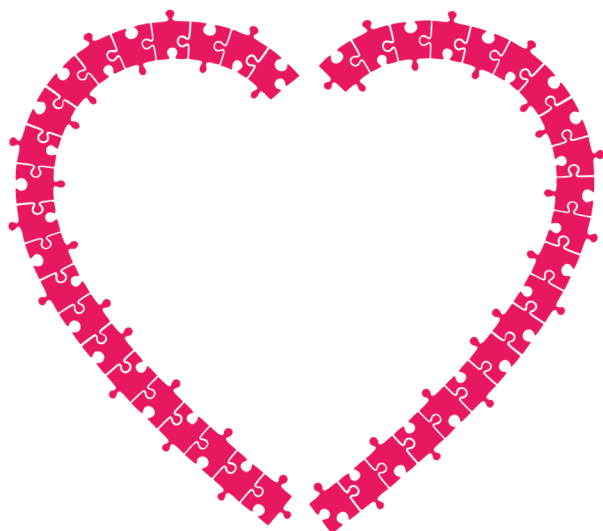




HEALING THE SPIRIT



Dear Donor Families,

Death – whether it is sudden or not – reminds me of dumping out a box of puzzle pieces. Everything is broken apart, scattered, and there are pieces that go missing. What a mess.

It has been two years since I lost my dad, and I am still picking up the pieces. I must remind myself of all the supportive things we share with all of you – and that it takes time. Often, much more time than we thought it would. Feelings of frustration, sadness, and even anger at some of the paperwork, “after death duties,” and even the memories will slow things down further.

Dr. Lani Leary shares helpful insights into coping with the internal conflicts that go along with trying to put the pieces back together. Understanding that it won't return to how it was, but that all is not hopeless, helps us navigate our grief journeys.

Warm Hugs,

Debbie Hutt, NDFS Director

Winter 2024

1-800-847-7831 | healingthespirit.org



UPCOMING EVENTS

Events are posted on the Donor Family Private Facebook page and on healingthespirit.org. All families are invited to all events!
(Please note that baseball games have limited tickets for each game)

Self-Care Workshop

March 14: Tukwila, WA

For more info & to register:

<https://cvent.me/dlbG3P?locale=en>



In Celebration & Remembrance Events

April 14: Virginia Beach, VA

Grand Affairs

<https://cvent.me/2erEBO>



April 21: Richmond, VA

Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens

<https://cvent.me/wrBMLm>



April 28: Roanoke, VA

Hotel Roanoke

<https://cvent.me/vrD5L4>



Take Me Out to the Ballgame!

See page 4 for the Donor Family Baseball games dates!¹

Healing Tears



Dear Dr. Leary:

Why do I feel such ambivalence after my husband died? I loved him but am filled with anger and memories of his selfishness. Signed, Conflicted

Dear Conflicted:

“How could I love someone so much and be glad that they’re gone?” With that question comes self-judgment and shame. Let the reality of the confusion be there. It is not all of your reality. But shame puts your feelings in a closet, and in the dark they grow and become exaggerated until you believe that they are all there is. Look deeper and be curious about your relationship and about him; remember the love despite your pain of losing it.

You probably have normal, confusing feelings of blame, disappointment or anger over something that he did or said. There may be unfinished business that you did not get to address directly because of the suddenness of death or the weight of caring for him. If you had time, you might have been able to tell him the “whole truth”, which includes the contradictions and messiness of a life together. If you had time, you could have listened deeply to each other, and sorted through feelings together so that the memory of each other was full of understanding, acceptance, and gratitude.

But instead, you are left with ambiguous feelings and the complexities of a normal relationship. In any truly intimate relationship, we learn about the whole person, including their faults and weaknesses as well as their strengths and virtues. It can be the work of a lifetime, or a whole marriage, to accept the whole person and the reality of a real relationship.

The most difficult work of grief is to accept the reality of the death. Similarly, the most difficult work of accepting the reality of death is to allow for the unabridged reality of a person: all the conflicting elements of the person that we loved. It is tough, courageous work to see the “whole” of the relationship...the ups, downs, the mundane, and the ecstasy. Where you focus is how you will define the grief in the moment.

It takes real courage to sit with whatever comes up in our inner emotional world, especially during our grief when we might be expected to not speak ill of the dead, or to put them up on a pedestal. But in fact, when we see only part of our loved one, discarding their humanity and frailties, we separate ourselves from them. We create suffering by distancing from the real person.

Life, and our loved one, is not black-and-white or all-good or all-troubling. By extension, relationships are not all positive or negative. When you allow yourself to explore the complexity and contradictions of your loved one, you may be able to feel closer to him. You may be surprised to recall his kindness during his pain, or your appreciation even after your disappointment. If we are alive, we have felt disappointment and anger. It is one of the most common human emotions, and one of the most frequently expressed emotions after a death. Let the anger connect you to others who also are going through their grief, and do not deny it or pretend that it doesn’t come up. Express it privately, in a journal or sobbing alone. Find someone who will let you vent your anger without interrupting or judgement. Like sadness, the best way out of anger is to go into it. The healing happens when we allow room for it all to exist in its contradictions and confusions.

Let it be,
Lani

Lani Leary, Ph.D., specializes in work with chronically ill, dying and bereaved clients. Dr. Leary has worked for the past 25 years as a psychotherapist in private practice and in six hospices across the country.

Have a question for Dr. Leary? Contact us at DFS@lifenethealth.org.



The Journey

Honoring Donors on the Donate Life Float in the Annual Rose Parade

Thanks to support from the LifeNet Health Foundation, one donor is honored in the annual Rose Parade on the Donate Life float on January 1st in Pasadena, CA. You may wonder how one donor is picked for this special honor – it is not an easy process for us as we would love to highlight ALL our donors! In a few months, we will send out the invitation to submit your loved one to be considered for the 2025 Rose

Parade. In addition to their loved one being honored in the parade, two family members will travel with one of the Donor Family Services staff to CA for pre-parade activities and to watch the parade. Travel expenses are covered by the grant provided by the LifeNet Health Foundation. Be sure to watch the Facebook page, next issue of the newsletter, and the healingthespirit.org website for more information.

Here are four Rose Parade honorees:



Dani Clarke Reese (2024 Parade)



Andrew Madison (2020 Parade)



Tyler Spann (2022 Parade)



Brittany Hoover (2023 Parade)

Donor Family Resources

Looking for more support? Here are some resources available to you and your family:

- Grief Companion Program – please contact Paulette Cordes
paulette_cordes@lifenethealth.org
- Donor Family Facebook Group – please contact Chloe Reichert
chloe_reichert@lifenethealth.org
- Healing the Spirit website – www.healingthespirit.org

Looking for more involvement? Here are some opportunities:

- Be a part of the Community Ambassador Program
- Volunteer at Donor Family Services and LifeNet Health Foundation Events
- Join the Donor Family Advisory Committee (DFAC)

For more information, please contact michaely_jones@lifenethealth.org

Spring/Summer **Donor Family Baseball Game Events** (watch the website & FB page for more information)

May 13: Seattle Mariners, WA
May 18: Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp, FL
June 8: Pensacola Blue Wahoos, FL
June 23: Salem Red Sox, VA
July 28: Norfolk Tides, VA

If you would like more information on any
Donor Family Service Programs, please contact us.

800.847.8731 | DFS@lifenethealth.org