

# Innerpoint

Winter 2012

**“I just don’t want them to do anything permanent.”**

This statement shocked me for a moment. I didn’t say anything out loud, but inside I found myself thinking, “Permanent? You probably only have a few months left! Why are you worried about permanence?” My patient was telling me about a procedure he was getting that would drastically reduce his pain, but would cause him to lose his ability to walk unassisted for a few months. It was my first visit as a hospice volunteer since I started medical school, and it made me realize how quickly I had forgotten that there are people behind these diseases!

For the past year and a half, my life has been consumed with medicine. I’ve dissected cadavers, memorized drugs and organisms, taken dozens of exams, and in the process have unconsciously started to lose focus on why I wanted to do this in the first place – to help people. It’s easy to do! We spend hours upon hours drilling disease processes and treatments, poring over tissue slides and pathology specimens, but rarely do we talk about what this means for patients and their loved ones. It becomes a game of figuring out the diagnosis and giving all the right answers to impress the attending physicians. It is extremely important to learn all of this, but without the perspective of the humanity behind the illness, I feel like my education is severely deficient. That is why I came back to Providence. I needed to relearn how to listen and be present without rummaging in my brain for the differential diagnosis or thinking about how to organize the history of present illness. I needed to get back to where I started, caring for people with diseases instead of diseases with people.

**The value of volunteering**

Volunteering has been so important to me because I get to interact with patients without having to fix their problems. I’m not being graded, and nobody is expecting an oral case presentation after the visit. I can just enjoy being with them, listening to their stories and helping them bear their burdens.

This is why I wanted to be a doctor! As I sat in the chair listening to my patient, my first reaction was based on looking at a problem and seeing the most logical way to fix the problem, even if it might have other consequences. Why would permanent consequences matter if the patient wasn’t going to live much longer? When I opened my eyes, however, I didn’t see a “patient”. I saw a man who has had his life turned upside down in a short amount of time. He’s scared, frustrated, and doing his best to keep his independence and a sense of dignity. He isn’t looking for logic – he’s looking for someone to help him hold onto hope. This is why it was so important to me to start volunteering with Providence Hospice again. I need medical school to teach me how to recognize and treat illness, but I need volunteering to teach me how to walk with real people through their illness. ~



written by Catherine Stout,  
patient care volunteer

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## Welcome New Volunteers! November 2011 Training Attendees

*Back row:* Joan Blacker, Kiara Elliott, Donna Kotulock, Sabrina Chen, Rae Wiseman, Erica McGivern, Bill Browers, Kumar Vasudevan, Jake Hemmingway, *Front row:* Jennifer Kimball, Christina Morse, Rachael Bussell, Sarah McHugh, Brittany Sullivan & Galen Pizzorno

### Camp Erin 2012

We are happy to announce that **Camp Erin 2012** will be held over the weekend of August 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>. Providence has informational fliers if anyone knows of a family who may be interested in camp. Volunteers are also an integral part of Camp Erin; so if you are interested in volunteering or know of anyone who would be a great candidate (we need some more guys!) to support the campers, you can contact:

**Chris Olson, Camp Erin Director**  
[christopher.olson@providence.org](mailto:christopher.olson@providence.org)  
or you can call Chris directly at 206-749-7689.

Again, thanks for all the support and encouragement throughout the year for camp! You guys rock!  
~Chris Olson, Camp Director

## Kudos ♥ Kudos ♥ Kudos

To our bereavement volunteers...

Thank you to **Mary Jean, Jose, Joyce, Cheryl, Meredith, Margo, Carol, Jane, Nancy and Suzan** for their compassionate support in our *Growing Through Grief*, the *Newly Bereaved, A Time to Grieve, Letting Grow* and our *Ways to Remember Grief* support groups. Their presence, planning and support help our bereaved clients process their grief in a safe place. Thank you to **Suzan, Joyce, Mary Jean, Jane, Margo, Lisa, Jose and Johanna** for providing

supportive calls to bereaved clients on the third Saturday of every month. We have reached a lot of clients with a Saturday call and your willingness to be here on the weekend is greatly appreciated. Thank you to **Jane Brem** and **Joan Brindle** for spending time in our office during the weekdays to provide bereavement calls and organize our mailings. Thank you to **Jane** and **Mary Jean** for your help in setting up and supportive presence at both the **Spring Memorial Service** and **Winter Grief and the Holidays**. Thank you to **Lisa** for your many home baked goods and supportive presence at the Winter Grief and the Holidays. Thank you to **Catherine Stout** for her delicious pink cake contribution for the Grief and the Holidays evening....the children loved it! A huge thank you to **Jose Floresca** for being willing to volunteer at **Camp Erin** with very short notice, as well as, helping direct guests in the parking lot at the Grief in the Holidays evening....the air was cold, but your heart was warm! And, many, many, many thanks to **Meredith, Ted, Nancy, Margo, Paul, Mary Jean, Sharon, Abe, Lani, Lisa** and **Jose** for their ongoing supportive calls from home to our bereaved clients. Your calls provide a thread of care and compassion that help our bereaved clients know they are not alone as they walk their journey of grief.

~Leslie Overturf, Grief Support Specialist



I saw my patient today. She has been bedbound for some time with ALS. I saw a striking flower arrangement in her room and commented on it. She says it came from her **volunteer**, who often brings beautiful flowers from her garden. This patient loves beauty, and it really brightens her day to see nature's beauty brought in for her. Her volunteer has also been helping her with Christmas cards; she found great stickers to embellish the cards, which she just loved. Thank you for knowing my patient so well, and bringing such joy to her life.

~Debbie Terrill, RN Maple Care Team

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### Volunteer Gentle Reminder!

Please spell out your patient's first and last name when you leave your voice mails. Cell phones can be difficult to hear. Thank you!

# The Spiritual Dimension of Grief

Article submitted by Andrea Swope,  
Patient Care Volunteer



**I cannot think** of a more enticing title for a hospice in-service than “The Spiritual Dimension of Grief”, nor can I think of a more fitting subject for our emotional experience as volunteers. I believe, on some level, it must be a universal experience that each of us as hospice volunteers, and as staff are pressed to explore. Therefore, I could not resist attending the in-service with that title that Jane Fleming facilitated in December. Jane referred to the theory by Elizabeth Kubler Ross of the stages of grief: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance. But she chose to focus on a different theory of stages. It started with Change, then Loss, Mourning, Healing, Growth. Both theories seem valid, though the latter carries a more positive implication that the overall experience can lead to hope and something bigger.

The word healing in there disarmed me. Just recently I had an experience of driving up 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NW, when I experienced what felt like a spontaneous gushing forth of tears and feelings of grief connected to the loss of my father seven years ago. It felt so painful and unendurable. This was seven years after the loss and here I was still expressing inconsolable grief about it. Is there a possibility of healing? Indeed I have been hoping for that, but apparently not yet found it. I am in need of reassurance that something good can come out of this ridiculously painful experience of grief that can still come over me. On reflection, one could note I am in the mourning stage, not yet experiencing the healing stage. How does one find one’s way into and through the healing stage?

We talked about the idea that when you notice the word “why” in a question, one can safely conclude it is a spiritual question. The example was given of one woman’s experience wondering why her husband had suffered so much during his illness that lasted for years. “He was a good person,” she reasoned. Why would God do that to him? This questioning could be seen as an expression of a need to access a deeper or more expanded spiritual resource. Deepening this resource would lead to healing and then growth, according to this stage theory. I heard a Zen Buddhist teacher speak once about how one begins with the *Great Doubt* as though we are in a science lab doing experiments to explore this doubt and understand it better. As one gets to know it, there arises the *Great Faith*, and from that arises the *Great Vitality*—a hopeful sentiment.

We were also guided to explore the difference between spirituality and religion. We concluded that spirituality is the broader concept of which religion is just one aspect. A few years ago I read a book by Sharon Salzberg called *Faith*. In this book, she explores the question of faith. If you hit the wall, and there seems to be nothing there to put your faith in, what do you do? C.S. Lewis describes this place well in his book, *A Grief Observed*:

*Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing him, so happy that you are tempted to feel his claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to him with gratitude and praise, you will be, or so it feels, welcomed with open arms. But go to him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once... Why is he so present a commander in our time of prosperity, and so very absent a help in time of trouble?*

Sharon Salzberg’s conclusion to this is that faith can end up being just taking a step. You don’t know what will happen when you take the step; you don’t know if there will be a positive result, if it is even an appropriate next step, if there will be a satisfying answer, you don’t know if there is a higher power guiding you, or if one will be there, but just take a step. It is a concept that is beyond believing in any particular answer, beyond believing in a higher power and it encompasses any process that might help, or not help – just taking a step is sometimes all we can do. That might be the bottom line definition of faith and what will help us find our spiritual answers or might be the ultimate spiritual answer.

Concluding the evening we watched a slideshow that depicted different human and cultural expressions of grief.

Grief, apparently, is a universal human experience. We then participated in a Hebrew ritual first hand by having each of us tear a piece of fabric. In this culture they tear their actual clothing. There is something satisfying in this physical expression of what it literally feels like is happening inside when someone you love dies. (I was present when my father passed out of his body. As he did, it felt like a physical rending or tearing of a bond that had been there since before I was born.)

I would like to think that there is a nice pat healing answer that will put this emotion of grief into a nice comfortable place. Though I think instead it is like someone told me years ago. When the heart breaks it does not necessarily heal by the crack closing back up. But rather that crack expands the heart allowing space for greater love. As I sit with my patients as a hospice volunteer, and a question arises of why? the only suitable conclusion seems to be to just love more and bigger. (or is it - just more and bigger love - ?).

# THANK YOU for ALL THAT YOU DO!

Anniversaries  
years of volunteering

## Support & Kinship

## TB Tests

January	Years volunteering
Dennis Alton	1
Megan Cabigting	5
Mark Charonis	4
Jan Davis	3
Mary Jackson	1
Stacey Rittmueller	1
Eva Ropers	1
David Shapland	1
Heather Timkin	1
Wallace Thompson	1
Jack Warfield	1
Edie Warner	11
Gwen Wilson	1

February	Years Volunteering
Tom Desbrisay	15
Kathy Hastings	4
Ara Jane Olufson	4

March	Years Volunteering
Mike Caldwell	1
Tara Connor	3
Rene DeVinck	2
Lisa Marie Ford	4
Linda Gill	2
Aaron Grad	2
Jensine Mittet	3
Daniel Pearson	2
Brett Shepherd	3
Judy Stoffel Loewen	5
Elvira Sun Han	5
Sofia Voz	1
Tracy Zitnik	1

**THANK YOU SO MUCH!**

### 2012 Support & Kinship Meetings

6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Save the dates!  
(We will email you regularly)

- Tuesday, Jan 31 Support meeting:  
*Topic "Anxiety"*
- Tuesday, Feb 28 Kinship meeting:  
*Topic: "We Honor Veterans Video"*
- Wednesday, March 28 Support meeting:  
*Topic: "Poetry Reading"*
- Tuesday, April 24 Support meeting:  
*Topic: "Resilience"*
- Wednesday, May 23 Kinship meeting:  
*(topic TBA)*
- Tuesday, June 12 Support meeting:  
*(Topic TBA)*
- Tuesday, July 17 Support meeting:  
*(Topic TBA)*
- Tuesday, August 21 Kinship meeting:  
*Topic: Self Care: Clay Pinch Pots*
- Wednesday, Sept 26 Support meeting:  
*(Topic TBA)*
- Tuesday, Oct 23 Support meeting:  
*(Topic TBA)*
- Tuesday, Nov 27 Kinship meeting:  
*(Topic TBA)*
- Wednesday, Dec 12 Support meeting:  
*(Topic TBA)*

### Stepping Stones Support Meetings:

- Thursday, Feb 16, 6:00 to 7:30 pm
- Tuesday, May 1, 6:00 to 7:30 pm
- Tuesday, July 24, 6:00 to 7:30 pm
- Wednesday, Oct 10, 6:00 to 7:30 pm

### 2012 TB Testing Dates

8:00 to 9:00 a.m.

(We will email you when you are due)

The TB test is administered on Monday mornings between 8:00 & 9:00 a.m. Volunteers return the following Wednesday (same time) for the tests to be read. You will be notified by e-mail when your annual TB testing is due.

- Mon., 1/16 and Wed., 1/18
- Mon., 1/30 and Wed., 2/1
- Mon., 2/13 and Wed., 2/15
- Mon., 2/27 and Wed., 2/29
- Mon., 3/12 and Wed., 3/14
- Mon., 3/26 and Wed., 3/28
- Mon., 4/9 and Wed., 4/11
- Mon., 5/7 and Wed., 5/9
- Mon., 5/21 and Wed., 5/23
- Mon., 6/4 and Wed., 6/6
- Mon., 6/18 and Wed., 6/20
- Mon., 7/16 and Wed., 7/18
- Mon., 7/30 and Wed., 8/1
- Mon., 8/13 and Wed., 8/15
- Mon., 8/27 and Wed., 8/29
- Mon., 9/10 and Wed., 9/12
- Mon., 9/24 and Wed., 9/26
- Mon., 10/8 and Wed., 10/10
- Mon., 10/22 and Wed., 10/24
- Mon., 11/5 and Wed., 11/7
- Mon., 11/19 and Wed., 11/21
- Mon., 12/3 and Wed., 12/5
- Mon., 12/17 and Wed., 12/19

