

Dear Friend,

Perhaps you've experienced or noticed it, too – the heavy grief and loss that clings like a shadow to the COVID-19 pandemic. Grief is naturally isolating, and COVID-19 increases this isolation. During a recent telehealth visit with one of our Chesapeake Life Center bereavement counselors, 78-year-old Kim described her experience of grieving the death of her older brother James:

"I'm old enough that I've lost loved ones before, but this time it's different and much harder. It was heart-wrenching enough that James had COVID and I couldn't see him in his final days. Then our family decided it was too risky to have a public memorial service, and I wasn't able to travel for the small, private ceremony at his gravesite.

"We haven't been able to mourn together and console each other. It just won't feel right until we've celebrated James' life and put him properly to rest in our hearts."

When our bereavement counselor asked Kim what it's been like as weeks passed, she looked away and said sheepishly, "To be honest, I'm angry much of the time. People call to offer condolences, but the conversation quickly turns to the pandemic. James and my grief over losing him get lost in the process, and that hurts.

"So many lives are in turmoil and so many people are suffering and sad that my grief over my brother's death almost seems selfish. But it's real and I'm still right here feeling very alone with it. I can't imagine what it would be like without the support I get from the Chesapeake Life Center!"

— Kim

(over please)



“Of course, as soon as I start feeling sorry for myself, I feel guilty. Nearly everyone I know has experienced a serious loss of some kind or another due to COVID-19 – not only actual deaths, but losses of jobs and homes, companionship, familiar routines, religious gatherings, and support networks.”

Our staff helped Kim realize that her feelings were very natural. They helped her use the time in pandemic isolation to quietly reflect on her feelings, her memories of James, and things she would like to be sharing with him now. Kim joined the SoulCollage online group and began writing in a journal.

Kim realizes that what she needs is for people to listen to and affirm her grief, not to talk to her about COVID-19. With our help, she learned to communicate that clearly, lovingly, and without guilt. As Kim’s story shows, the Chesapeake Life Center’s services are needed now more than ever. We work hard to maintain the balance of reducing exposure to the virus and decreasing the isolation of grievers.

When the pandemic began, we quickly adapted to offering support groups via a telehealth platform, Zoom for Healthcare. Counseling sessions are available via phone or online as well as in person, following recommended protocols, and our counselors have all received training in telehealth so that our programs meet best practice standards. We’ve also used this quieter time to renovate our Chesapeake Life Center office space to better accommodate cleaning between in-person sessions – at a cost to us of nearly \$20,000.

We offer support groups for those dealing with the loss of a life partner or spouse, child, parent or parental figure, or cherished pet, as well as groups for caregivers and those who’ve experienced a traumatic loss. Our support groups for children and teens have returned to meeting in person, following recommended safety guidelines and being outside whenever possible.

Charitable donations make it possible for the Chesapeake Life Center to innovate and help more people, during and well beyond the end of the pandemic. With your support we will remain a regional and national leader in bereavement care, ready for when you and your neighbors need us. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Michael J. Brady
President and CEO

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P.S. Your gift really matters! But you can also help others by spreading the word in person and on social media about our *Coping with COVID* educational video series at hospicechesapeake.org/video-library

