

SPRING NEWSLETTER

March 2024

Dear Boston Children's Hospital Families,

Spring has officially begun. As we look around, we see the emergence of new life in the growth of fresh flowers, plants, and trees, with added sunlight extending our days and holding the evenings at bay. Spring is known as a time of renewal and rebirth. And while Spring is generally seen as a positive time, it does not always feel this way in the case of grief.

We know that grief does not shift in direct response to the changing seasons. In fact, the expectation and belief that the spring thaw can melt away one's grief and pain can actually make it more difficult for individuals to cope. While the cold and isolation of winter harbors its own grief challenges, as the weather warms, those who are grieving may not feel ready for the expectations that this new season brings. Spring also ushers in more holidays--days when your child's absence can feel incredibly pronounced, and which can serve as painful reminders of the child you are missing.

But remember:

"Grief is just like the seasons: coming, going, and cycling over time."

No feeling and no season is final. So, we encourage you: do not hurry your grief along. Instead, nurture it. And keep moving with your grief--figuratively and literally. If possible, try to get outdoors; take a walk while listening to your child's favorite song; talk with friends or family about your child; engage in conversation with your child while you watch the sunset; plant flowers of your child's favorite color. Find reminders of your child in nature and stay connected to him/her in whatever way you can and however feels right.

And if you are able, please join us for our annual hospital memorial service on Thursday, May 30th at 6pm to remember and honor your children (details below in our community events section).

Wishing you gentleness and compassion in each changing season,

SoYun Kwan
BCH Bereavement Program Social Worker

Grief in Spring

Grief in the Season of Renewal - This article from 'What's Your Grief' describes the complicated feelings that Spring can bring for the grieving person and offers some "gentle reminders" as we approach the changing season.

Lean into Spring - This post from 'Transformative Grief' offers a reflection on the "seasons of grief."

Senses And Memories: When Spring Triggers A Wave Of Grief - This article from a bereaved mother and clinician from 'Still Standing' describes the wave of grief she experiences in the Spring.



Mother's and Father's Day for Bereaved Parents



[Tips for Acknowledging Mother's Day and Father's Day](#) - tip sheet from the [Dougy Center](#).

[Mother's Day and Father's Day Grief](#) - podcast episode from [What's Your Grief](#)

[Still a Mother](#) - blog post from [A Bed for my Heart](#)

[11 Questions for Bereaved Dads on Father's Day](#) - interview with bereaved dads from [Just Enduring](#)

Family Activities

Some families choose to plant a memorial garden to honor their child's memory. This can be an indoor or outdoor space created with the intention to remember and honor your child. A memorial garden can be as simple as a single tree or flower that blooms in your child's favorite color.

Below are some resources that may guide you in designing and planting a memorial garden:

www.averys-garden.com/gardeningthroughgrief

www.stillstandingmag.com/2018/02/17/gardening-through-grief/

If an outdoor garden is not feasible, this 'Brief Grief Activity' for a paper flower memory garden can be a great option for bereaved siblings in the Spring.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJu0TEQ0QpA



Virtual Support Groups

When Grief is New – Boston Children's Hospital Bereavement Program

"When Grief is New" is a 3-part series for parents/caregivers who have experienced the recent death of their child. Offered quarterly, this series incorporates an educational component and also provides participants an opportunity to connect with fellow bereaved parents in a supportive manner. Participants will ideally participate in all 3 sessions, which include:

- Understanding Grief
- Preparing for Firsts
- Navigating Changing Relationships

Thursdays, May 2-16, 12-1 pm

If you are interested, please contact:

bereavement.program@childrens.harvard.edu

Care Dimensions Newly-Bereaved virtual workshop

A one-time workshop for loss within the last three months. For anyone with a death in the last three months whose loved one was not connected to Care Dimensions Hospice. RSVP required by Thursday before group. *Open to MA residents only. *Not specific to child loss.

Monday, May 6, 3-5 pm

RSVP by contacting grief@CareDimensions.org or calling 855-774-5100

Community Events

Boston Children's Hospital Memorial Service

Joseph B. Martin Conference Center at Harvard Medical School

77 Avenue Louis Pasteur, Boston, MA 02115

Thursday, May 30th starting at 6pm

"A Time to Remember" is Boston Children's Hospital's Annual Memorial Service — an in-person evening of remembrance held every spring to honor the children we have lost. Incorporating a variety of music and readings, the memorial service joins together families with Boston Children's Hospital staff to celebrate the lives and memories of your children.

This year's service will honor children who died from January 1, 2022 through March 1, 2024. For further details and to RSVP, please visit:

www.go.childrenshospital.org/remember

Care Dimensions Service of Remembrance

Second Congregational Church 35 Conant Street

Beverly, MA Sunday, April 21, 3:00 – 4:00 pm

Care Dimensions cordially invites you and your family to join us for a Service of Remembrance to honor the memory and celebrate the life of your loved one. The service includes inspirational readings and reflective music. People of all faiths and spiritual beliefs are welcome to join in this time of remembrance. *Not specific to child loss. Please RSVP to grief@CareDimensions.org.

Second Congregational Church 35 Conant Street

Beverly, MA Sunday, April 21, 3:00 – 4:00 pm

Mother's Day Retreat, for mothers who have lost a child

Hope Floats Wellness

Friday, May 10, 10am-4pm

"Join us for a relaxing and healing day-long retreat just for moms whose children have passed. Relax with gentle yoga, journaling, and mini-healing treatments given by our certified and talented practitioners. Explore the benefits of Reiki and more. There is also time to explore our peaceful grounds, or to find a quiet spot in our beautiful main house to sit with a cup of tea. We will provide everyone with a wonderful lunch. This retreat is an opportunity to take care of yourself and meet other moms. We gain so much from sharing and being with others who are on this difficult grief journey."

Registration is required, stay tuned for online registration:

www.hopefloatswellness.org/support-programs-services/support-services/retreats/

Summer Grief and Bereavement Camps

Summer bereavement camps provide children and families with the opportunity to explore the outdoors and participate in traditional camp activities while connecting with others who have experienced a loss. The Children's Room features a detailed list of bereavement camps, including some which occur in the fall--click [here](#) for more information. Please continue reading below for more details on select camps in the New England area which are currently accepting applications.

Hole in the Wall Gang Camp Bereavement Program - CT

"For families who have lost a child aged 0 – 18 to serious illness, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp offers a residential bereavement program. The program includes a total of three weekends over the course of 12 months where families will find connection and a community of support among others who understand their experiences of loss. Families share in Camp activities, participate in group sessions facilitated by a trained bereavement specialist and a gathering each evening to remember and celebrate the children who have died."

2024-2025 Schedule:

April 4-7, 2024

November 7-10, 2024

Spring 2025

[Click here for the 2024 Application](#)



Hole in the Wall Gang Camp

Rett's Roost Open to Healing Family Grief Retreat - MA
Rolling Ridge Retreat Center, North Andover, MA
June 29, 3:30pm-July 3, 11:30am

"Rett's Roost will be hosting up to 8 families from Saturday through Wednesday, providing nearly four full days of therapeutic support and connecting with others. Prior to the retreat, parents will meet on zoom for 2 story-sharing, grief-work sessions in May and June. This allows people to feel more comfortable coming together in-person in the summer already having met online. Besides plenty of time to relax at the retreat, we offer activities that allow you to share with others and heal within. The agenda will include grief support, yoga, art, and music for both parents and children. Also, get a massage, energy treatment, and have professional family portraits taken. Kids activities are provided by Sage's Entertainment, Curious Creatures, Kids Kicking Cancer, and other wonderful collaborators.

For this retreat, we will accept up to 8 families that have lost a child to cancer or other chronic medical illness. There is no restriction on the amount of time since your child's death. You must reside within the six New England states, or NY or NJ. Our retreats are best suited for children between the ages of 4-15, however, we do welcome families with older and younger children. Unfortunately, we cannot accept parents that lost their only child or only have surviving children older than 18 at this retreat."

[Click Here for the 2024 Family Grief Retreat Application](#)



Rett's Roost Family Grief Retreat

Comfort Zone Camp - MA
Camp Burgess - Sandwich, MA
May 31-June 2

This free camp program serves children ages 7-17 (18 if still in high school) who have lost a parent, guardian, sibling, or friend. Comfort Zone Camps are free and include trust-building activities and age-based support groups that break the emotional isolation grief often brings. This camp will include a separate optional parent/guardian overnight weekend program.

[Click here for the 2024 Camper Application](#)

Camp Erin Boston - MA

Camp Erin Boston 2024 Session will consist of 4 parts:

1. Online family interview (June 2024. Dates/Times TBA)
2. Pre-camp Ice Cream Social (July 14, 2024 3-5pm Newton, MA)
3. Camp Day! (Middleboro, MA August 17, 2024 9am-7pm)
4. Reunion (October 2024 Newton, MA. Date/Time TBA)

Any child or teen ages 5-18, and their family who have experienced the death of someone close to them is eligible to attend, please

Click here for the 2024 camper family application. Applications are due by May 1, 2024, and are accepted on a rolling basis.

Contact jwiles@gscommunitycare.org, or call (508)309-5107 for more information.

Camp Erin Boston

Saturday, August 17 2024
9:30am-7pm, Middleboro, MA



Camp Erin® Boston is a free bereavement camp for youth and their families grieving the death of a significant person in their lives.

Families attend a day camp experience that combines emotional support with fun, traditional camp activities. Led by bereavement professionals and caring volunteers, campers:

- explore their grief
- learn essential coping skills
- experience community with other families who are also grieving
- and have fun!



For more information:
Contact Jennifer Wiles, Camp Director

 jwiles@gscommunitycare.org

 508-309-5107

For camper/volunteer applications, visit:

 camperinboston.org

I love Camp Erin because it helped me remember how brave and strong I am.

Camper, age 10

 Good Shepherd Community Care

Camp Erin was created and is supported in part by Eluna. For more information, please visit elunanetwork.org.



Book Corner and Family Spotlight

Fifty-Seven Fridays: Losing Our Daughter; Finding Our Way by Myra Sack

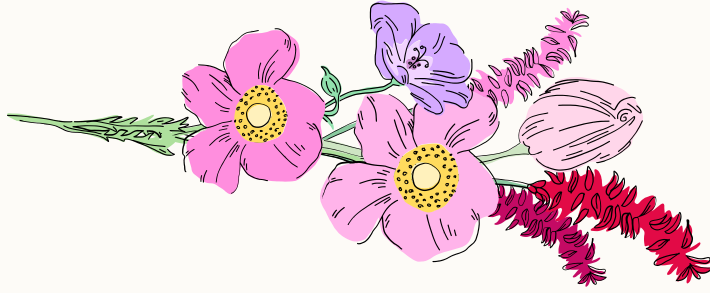
“Life is unfolding as planned for Myra Sack and her husband Matt until their beautiful year-old daughter Havi is diagnosed with Tay-Sachs, a fatal neurodegenerative disease, and given only a year to live. Myra and Matt decide to celebrate Havi’s short life and vow to show her as much of the world as they can...Tapping into their Judaism, they transform Friday night Shabbats into birthday parties –“Shabbirthdays”–to replace the birthdays Havi will never have.”



When asked “What advice do you have for others who are in the throes of grief?” Myra shared:

“It isn’t fair. It is impossibly painful and so few people can really access the kind of pain you are in. Trust yourself. Trust your emotions. Let yourself feel them all. And if there is even one person who is sacred enough to hold it with you, or try to hold some of it, let them. Eventually, a community of others like us will come into your life, too. They are exquisite and strong and vulnerable and real and deep and with them, your grief will find some refuge. As often as possible, move. Get to nature. Let pockets of beauty move you, surprise you, soften you. And don’t tolerate bad behavior. Perhaps there will be people who want to rush you, fix you, shame you – they are not worthy of your time. At least not yet.”

Join the author for a discussion, hosted by the Courageous Parents Network, on Monday, April 1st at 8:00 pm ET on Zoom
[Register Here](#)



Family Submission: “If Spring Was a Person” by Addi’s sister, Sam

If spring was a person, it would be my sister. Warmth and youth, new things and joy, opening the backyard pool up for the season, and something that would ultimately be short lived. When she was alive, I would pick a flower and bring it to her every time I went outside. I picked red or pink ones if I could, since those were her favorite colors.

It was spring when she wished for a pool, and it was spring when her wish came true. It was spring when she was born, and it was spring when she met the local fire department. The department was her baby. She lived and breathed fire safety, and she kept a watchful eye over the station and her fire fighters.

My sister was plane rides and ice cream trucks, bright smiles and laughs that filled the room, flowers and fire. She was joy through hardships, and laughter in the face of adversity. Even when she was paralyzed, frozen from the neck down, she laughed and smiled and played.

My mother is winter, beautiful and calm. My father and youngest sister are summer, bright and intense. I am autumn, cool and brisk. My middle sister was spring. She was white bunnies and coconut cake, Peep marshmallows and egg hunts. My sister was melting snow and cool breezes. She was baby birds learning to fly and days growing longer. My sister was spring in its entirety.

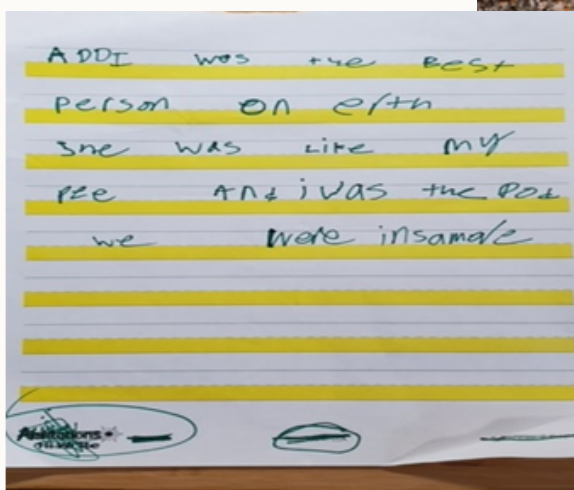
When it rained, my sister would put on red boots and her red rain jacket, bunnyhopping in puddles and squealing with glee. When it was warm and dry, she drew on the driveway with red and pink chalk. When it was hot, she wore pink bathing suits and swam in her pool. For her birthday, she had ice cream cake and mac n’ cheese. When she watched tv, all she wanted was fire trucks and ambulances.

My sister loved babies. She adored all kinds--human ones, puppies, kittens--and cooed "Hi, baby!" and waved whenever she saw one. She squatted in front of them and handed them toys and cheerios, and she fretted over them when they cried.

My sister and spring are intertwined in my head. You cannot have one without the other, just like how you cannot have joy without sorrow or pleasure without pain. My sister knew these things well. She knew that pain meant she was alive, and that feeling sad meant she was able to feel happy. Spring cannot exist without winter.

It was spring when she was last home alive. We celebrated Easter, Christmas, and her twelfth birthday all within three weeks. It was spring when she went back to the hospital for the last time. It was spring when I knew the end of her adventure was coming soon, and it was summer when she died. It was summer when we celebrated her life, a sea of people wearing pink and red, beads and pink feather boas, a pink sequined dress I'd never wear again. It was summer when we looked up at the stars and said "Hello Addi, thank you for showing us how to love life."

To view the poem on Addi's site, 'Big Beautiful Life,' and to hear the audio of Addi's sister, Sam, reading her poem, click [here](#)



We hope this newsletter provides a space to help connect you with grief resources and programs, and to support shared experiences and connections between BCH families who have experienced child loss. If you would like to contribute to our newsletter by sharing a recommendation for a book, podcast, article, or resource that you believe will be helpful to other families, please click [this link](#) to let us know about it, and we will try to include it in an upcoming edition. If you would like to send a letter or poem to share, or to be featured in our family spotlight, also click on the link above or email it to: bereavement.program@childrens.harvard.edu



[Connect with BCH Bereavement Program's Facebook Page](#)



[Sign Up for our electronic mailing list](#)



SoYun Kwan has been a clinical social worker at Boston Children's Hospital since 2005. She has worked in the Medical/Surgical Intensive Care Unit, and in the Liver, Intestine, and Multivisceral Transplant Program, supporting families facing serious illness. She currently runs the BCH Bereavement Program, where she is dedicated to offering bereavement support and programming to BCH families.

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Ellie Frechette is one of the clinical social workers on the Pediatric Advanced Care Team (PACT), who specializes in supporting bereaved parents/caregivers and siblings. Ellie currently runs many of the programs offered through the bereavement program, including support groups, educational sessions, and expressive arts workshops.

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Please reach out for further resources or recommendations