



MOMENTS



MATTER

Grief in action

BRIAN CHILTON, PhD

The term *chesed* is a Hebrew word that holds powerful overtones.

Chesed is used more than 250 times in the Hebrew Bible (i.e., the Old Testament of the Christian Bible) and is often translated as “loving kindness,” “steadfast love,” or even more appropriately “loyal love” (Lexham Bible Dictionary). The writers of the Old Testament often use the term to describe the eternal love of God for humanity. However, on a personal level, *chesed* speaks of love in action (LBD). That is, *chesed* love is not one that only claims to love someone verbally, but rather, it’s a love that proves itself by its actions. Grief, in many ways, is an expression of love. The reason we mourn is due to our great love for the person we lost. Feelings of sorrow flood the soul as we adjust to the new normal. But how can we continue to show love for those we lost while dealing with our own grief? In many ways, *chesed* love can help. Our grief can be transformed into love-in-action to honor those we lost. Consider the following steps.

Step one: Reflect on the passions of our loved ones

First, reflect on what your loved



one enjoyed doing. Some enjoyed painting. Others may have enjoyed sewing. I met some people who enjoyed painting rocks. For those who are athletic, their loved ones may enjoy playing sports, watching sports, or going on a hike. You may find it beneficial to discuss the enjoyments of your loved one with family and friends.

Step two: Assess how you can honor your loved one

Second, assess how you might be able to honor your loved one by passing on their passion to benefit others. For instance, if your loved one enjoyed hiking, perhaps

you and your family could join a benefit walk in their memory. Coach a children’s sports team. Be creative! This is a time that you can both honor the one you lost while helping others in the process.

Step three: Incorporate your loved one’s passion into action

Finally, the last step is incorporating your plan into action. Many of our plans fall by the wayside because we do not prioritize them. You don’t need to place any kind of pressure on yourself, especially with all that you’ve been through. But if this is something that you and your family think that you’d like to do, then develop a plan of action. It could be that you decide to make new memories and traditions while remembering old ones.

Everyone grieves differently. However, I’ve heard from numerous people from various walks about how therapeutic it is to help others, even in times of grief. By placing your grief into action, you may find that the memory of your loved one lives on through acts of kindness – the definition of *chesed* love. No matter your perspective, we can all agree that the world could use a lot more kindness and love. The great irony is that the one who is often helped the most by putting grief into action is the one performing the deed. And that help could be your first step to healing.

Getting to know your bereavement coordinators

Melissa Causby



Brian

CHILTON, Ph.D.
Assistant Director
of Family Services



Melissa

CAUSBY, GC-C
Bereavement
Coordinator

We recently began a new series where we interview our bereavement coordinators so that you can learn more about them. During these conversations, they share their own personal experiences with grief and offer important tips to empower us on our own journeys. Today, we speak with Melissa Causby, a bereavement coordinator covering the Yadkin office.

You moved to our area from Burke County located in the western part of North Carolina. What was it like growing up in Burke County?

When I was younger, we moved around a lot because my dad was in the military, a drill sergeant in the Army. We moved to Burke County during my later teen years. It was a very small town with only one stop-light. Today, they have two!

What was it like growing up with a drill sergeant?

Sometimes it was tough, but we learned a lot of discipline, how to schedule, be on time, be accountable. had white glove tests like drill sergeants would do — to see if we had dusted or not. It was interesting being an Army brat. People think I'm weird because my philosophy is that you make up your bed the first thing in the morning. If you get that first task done, imagine what you can do for the rest of the day. I don't dust anymore, though.

What led you to become a grief counselor?

Well, I guess that would be the loss I've faced. My entire family is deceased; my children and brother are the only family I have left. My son had a genetic disorder called Sanfilippo Syndrome. When he died, the local hospice agency had been with us for 13 years because they never knew when the

syndrome would take effect. After he passed, the ladies from hospice came in. It was then that I realized that I wanted to help others out in the same way that I had been helped. He died in January, and I started school the following May to study to become a grief counselor.

How have you personally dealt with loss in your life?

Journaling. I did a lot of journaling and a lot of self-care. I am an introvert. I wanted most people to leave me alone. So, I wrote a lot. I also had other children that kept me busy. I did go to a licensed counselor who was also my professor in college for human services. She took me under her wing and helped me process it. She taught me that self-care is the most important thing. You have to take time to take care of yourself. If you don't care for yourself, you can't care for others.

What are some things that people can do to help themselves through the grieving process?

Self-care is the biggest thing. Go out, take a walk, get some time to yourself, or even take a long bath. Self-care is the first and most important thing that you can do.

What's something that you'd like your clients to know about you that they might not know?

I'm very professional with my clients but silly otherwise. I try to make people laugh. I normally let my clients lead the conversations because I like to hear them and hear their memories.

Do you have any hobbies?

I love doing crafts. I have a Cricut machine that I use to make all kinds of pop-up cards, gift boxes, t-shirts, hats, and even wall decorations! I also enjoy reading and collecting books. I have books from the 1800s and also Bibles from 1902.

If you can find the humor in life and at times laugh at yourself, you won't have as much depression



Do you have any words of encouragement that you would like to share with someone going through a time of grief?

I would say to seek laughter every day; find humor in life and maybe even laugh at your own self. And know, grief does get better. It never leaves us, but it does get better with time.

WORD SEARCH

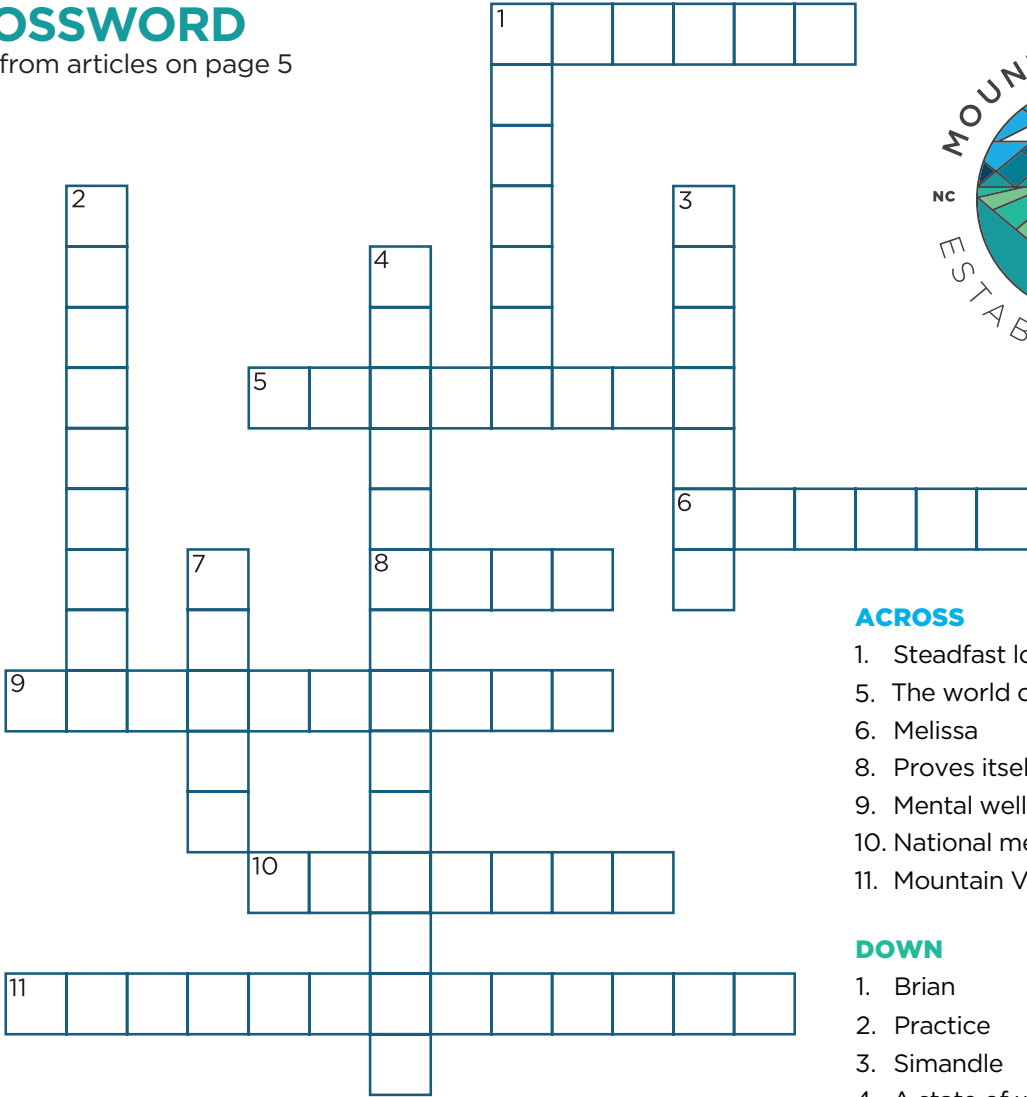
Find words from our Q&A. Good luck!

E	K	P	P	N	U	E	J	Q	G	O	I	J	G	S	L	J	L	Q	J
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JOURNALING
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 RESILIENCE
 PROCESS
 MENTAL HEALTH
 GRATITUDE
 BREATHE
 READ
 CONNECTIONS
 ACKNOWLEDGE
 MEDITATE

CROSSWORD

Clues from articles on page 5



ACROSS

1. Steadfast love
5. The world could use more of this
6. Melissa
8. Proves itself by its actions
9. Mental wellness helps build
10. National mental wellness month
11. Mountain Valley's newsletter

DOWN

1. Brian
2. Practice
3. Simandle
4. A state of well-being
7. Feels like fear

	1		7		6			8
7				3		2		
	9		8		4		3	1
	6				2	8		5
	3			4			7	
9		7	1				4	
5	7		4		8		2	
		1		9				6
2			5		3		1	

SUDOKU

The rules for sudoku are simple: A 9×9 square must be filled in with numbers from 1 to 9 with no repeated numbers in each line, horizontally or vertically. To challenge you more, there are 3×3 squares marked out in the grid, and each of these squares can't have any repeat numbers, either.

Ask the counselor: Wanting to call mom

JESSICA SIMANDLE, BSW
Bereavement Coordinator

Question: How can I cope with the momentary thought that I'll call Mom and realize she's died?

Response: Unfortunately, we need that reality to inform our brains that the death has occurred. It's not simply a dream that we've experienced. When our brains grasp that reality, it helps us to heal. When we're overcome by the reality of our grief, it feels like fear in our bodies. So, it's important to have a toolbox of strategies for when your grief feels very hard and overwhelming. I often suggest that clients go outside for 15–20 minutes. Get some fresh air, be in the sunlight, and use your five senses to find calm. What do you see, hear, smell, and touch? Maybe take a warm cup of coffee and a piece of chocolate and sit on your porch or stroll through your neighborhood. Then, go inside and journal about your thoughts. Name what you're feeling, "I feel really sad, and I just wish my mom was here." Do something to calm your mind, like a 10-minute breathing exercise or a guided meditation that you pull up on YouTube. After we've used our senses, processed our emotions, and found some calm to regulate our emotions, we have to be kind to ourselves. Make space for what makes this terrible reality you find yourself in a little bit easier, better, softer.

Mental wellness

MELISSA CAUSBY, GC-C
Bereavement Coordinator

January is National Mental Wellness Month. What is mental wellness? The World Health Organization defines mental wellness as "A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." Mental health is important in every stage of life, from infancy through adolescence, and into adulthood. Maintaining positive mental health is crucial to increase productivity, enhance self-image, improve relationships, and improve overall well-being.

The concept of mental wellness does not imply that we are free of depression, anxiety, or other mental issues. Rather, it refers to a state of our individual and overall well-being. Mental wellness is about being able to manage well in the good times as well as in the bad times. Mental wellness is an internal resource in each of us that helps us think, feel, connect, and function and it's an active process that helps us to build resilience, helps us grow and flourish.

There are several ways to maintain mental wellness. In my opinion, self-care is the most important way to maintain mental health. Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical and mental health. Practicing self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy.

While maintaining mental health, try to practice gratitude. Think of good things that happen to you daily. Acknowledge what you feel and why you feel that way. Try to reduce your stress level and get adequate sleep each night. Eat nutritious meals, and have meaningful connections with other people, such as friends and/or coworkers.

Other ways to maintain mental health may include writing down your thoughts in a journal, going on a nature walk, or relaxing by reading a good book. As you can see, there are numerous ways to practice self-care, and each one of us has a different version of what may work for our self-care.



Grief support groups

NORTH CAROLINA

SURRY COUNTY

2nd Thursday of each month @ 11:30am

January 11th

Union Hill Friends Church
2315 Red Brush Road, Mount Airy, NC 27030
Fonda Younger: (336) 789-2922

2nd Thursday of each month @ 11am

January 11th

Mountain Valley Elkin office
968 N Bridge Street, Elkin, NC 28621
Kelley Tolbert-Holbrook: (336) 526-2650

4th Monday of each month @ 10am

January 22nd

Mountain Valley Pilot Mountain office
129 Veterans Drive, Pilot Mountain, NC 27041
Jessica Simandle: (336) 583-8589

4th Thursday of each month @ 6pm

January 25th

Mountain Valley Elkin office
968 N Bridge Street, Elkin, NC 28621
Kelley Tolbert-Holbrook: (336) 526-2650

YADKIN COUNTY

1st Thursday of each month @ 11am

January 4th

SECU Hospice Care Center
243 N Lee Avenue, Yadkinville, NC 27055
Melissa Causby: (336) 679-2466

3rd Thursday of each month @ 6pm

January 18th

SECU Hospice Care Center
243 N Lee Avenue, Yadkinville, NC 27055
Melissa Causby: (336) 679-2466

WILKES COUNTY

3rd Monday of each month @ 6pm

January 15th

Reins-Sturdivant Funeral Home
270 Armory Road, North Wilkesboro, NC 28659
Kelley Tolbert-Holbrook: (336) 526-2650
Melissa Causby: (336) 679-2466

VIRGINIA

HENRY COUNTY

1st Wednesday of each month @ 2pm

January 3rd

King's Grant Retirement
350 Kings Way Road, Martinsville, VA 24112
Shannon Roberson: (888) 789-2922

2nd Tuesday of each month @ 10am

January 9th

The Community Fellowship
2674 Virginia Avenue, Collinsville, VA 24078
Shannon Roberson: (888) 789-2922

PATRICK COUNTY

3rd Thursday of each month @ 2pm

January 18th

Stuart United Methodist Church
101 East Blue Ridge Street, Stuart, VA 24171
Shannon Roberson: (888) 789-2922

GRAYSON COUNTY

3rd Monday of each month @ 2pm

January 15th

Mt Olivet United Methodist Church
Community Building
(gray building next to church)
6926 Carrollton Pike, Galax, VA 24333
Jessica Simandle: (888) 789-2922

No RSVP needed

Please attend the group nearest you.

Meeting dates and times are subject to change

For more information, please call the group's bereavement coordinator

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IN AFFILIATION WITH





Helpful books on grief and loss

There are more than 150 titles at the Allegheny, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin locations of the Northwestern Regional Library • mtnvalleyhospice.org/grief-library



+ January 2024 grief support group schedule

WELCOME
 to the NEW Moments Matter,
 our bereavement newsletter
 INSIDE:

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 Q&A with Melissa Causby
 Puzzles
 Ask the counselor
 Mental wellness



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