



MOMENTS



MATTER

Loving yourself through Valentine's Day

SAVANNAH POLING AND BRIAN CHILTON, PhD

Valentine's Day is thought of as the day of love. People usually spend the day with their beloved, red and pink roses, and a heart-shaped box of chocolates. The day is filled with love and happiness. Overall, most people would consider this to be an endearing, exciting day to be enjoyed with a loved one. But what about those people who've lost their dearest loved one?

Valentine's Day can bring a sense of anxiety for those grieving when thinking about the loss of many beloved traditions. However, that doesn't have to be the case. You could find that Valentine's might serve as a day of remembrance and love even through the grieving process. Here are a few ways you might be able to use your grief to celebrate the love that you shared with your beloved.

Love through the pain

During this season of grief, it's important to allow yourself to feel the pain that comes with loss — but also embrace the new. Let yourself feel these emotions and know that it's okay to have sadness, happiness, dread, or excitement. Losing a loved one is never easy, and readjusting to the "new normal" comes in waves.

Allowing yourself to feel emotions on the hardest of days helps you appreciate the joyful days that come. Understand that the depth of your grief stems from the richness of your love.



Love yourself

Loving yourself is easier said than done. It's within our nature to self-doubt and self-criticize. Being kind to your mind doesn't come easy to most. You may find yourself telling others that it's okay to rest and it's okay to have bad days. However, do you allow yourself the courtesy of taking the time to do the same? Often, caregivers take the least care of themselves.

So, treat yourself to your favorite meal, a delicious box of chocolates, your favorite bouquet of flowers, or even take spa day.

Memorialize your beloved with their favorite activities

If you celebrated Valentine's Day with someone special in the past, it could feel like you have lost certain traditions. You may find yourself not knowing what to do come February 14th. But why should those traditions cease? Perhaps you enjoyed watching a certain movie with your loved one. You could consider watching the film in their honor. If you enjoyed playing certain card games, ponder the possibility of inviting friends and family over to play their favorite game.

Valentine's Day may not be easy to celebrate while grieving, but it's possible that the holiday could be beautiful if you allow yourself to feel these emotions. Loving yourself through these challenging times is hard work. Self-love requires patience and understanding. It requires respect and compassion for yourself. Some of the tips we shared may not work for you at this time. If so, go easy on yourself. Find what works for you and start there.

Getting to know your bereavement coordinators

Shannon Roberson



Brian

CHILTON, Ph.D.
Assistant Director
of Family Services



Shannon

ROBERSON, BSW
Bereavement
Coordinator

Welcome to “Getting to know your bereavement coordinators.” Today, I spoke with Shannon Roberson, the bereavement coordinator for the Martinsville office that covers the eastern part of our Virginia service area (e.g., Stuart, Martinsville, and Danville). Shannon has worked both in bereavement and as a social worker.

How did you get your start as a bereavement coordinator?

The position became available when a previous bereavement coordinator left and the social worker department was being restructured. I feel like it worked out like it was meant to be because I was interested in bereavement. It was a change in dynamics. But this was the role I needed to take.

How so?

About five years ago, I was met with several difficulties while living in Winston-Salem. The company I was with downsized, and my family and I eventually moved to the Stuart area, where I’m originally from. A short time later, everything came full circle and I was able to fill the bereavement role.

Is there something about bereavement that you feel called to do?

Mountain Valley has had a big presence in our area for some time now. But what especially drew me to Mountain Valley is when they served my mother when she was diagnosed with cancer in 2018. She was only expected to live for a few weeks, but due to her will to live, she survived for several months. We also lost my brother-in-law at 47 years of age. Within two years, I lost a couple of family members and my job. My daughter also went

off to college. Losing a child to college can lead to a form of grief, as well. The following January, my brother-in-law passed and a year later, we began seeing some changes in my father-in-law with symptoms of dementia. So, I feel that God really worked things out to bring things full circle.

So, you’ve been met with grief head-on.

Yeah, my husband and I have been married for 30 years. So, even though technically his family has faced more loss than mine, his family is my family, too. So, it affects me, too.

How have you dealt with grief in your life?

As we all know, grief’s very individualized. Initially, when losing my job, my daughter’s departure, and the loss of loved ones, I turned to physical exercise. Also, my faith helped get me through. The physical activity truly helped more than anything. Sometimes, you just can’t wrap your head around why things happen as they do. I know God’s plan is perfect and unknowable. But when your 47-year-old brother-in-law passes just as he’d met the love of his life, you just can’t wrap your head around it.

I’m at the age now that you see so much death around you. People my parents’ age and other people I have known. I find myself staying in the moment. You can easily lose sight of what you have at the moment when you look too much to the future.

Do you have any hobbies that you enjoy?

Exercise, but I can’t say that it’s at the top of my list now. I enjoy live music of all kinds. When I can spend time with my adult children, that’s the biggest thing I like to do.

I like cooking and trying new things. I feel like I used to do more artsy kinds of things. But with raising a family, you have to choose what you can do. I would like to take some classes through our local community colleges, such as dog grooming.

I took some art classes at Surry Community College, and was amazed at how serene art was. When you use a different part of your brain, it really is therapeutic.

What's something that your clients don't know about you? Most may not know about my love for animals. Ellie Mae Clampett from the Beverly Hillbillies is my role model because of her love for animals. There's a place in Ridgeway, VA, called Infinity Acres that I'd like to visit. It's a therapeutic farm that's beneficial for those with special needs. I would love to help with a farm like that as it would help our community.

Do you have any tips that you'd like to share on how people can better deal with grief? Really, I think this ties back to being in the moment. Don't overthink things. Being positive is a stretch at times. Just focus on the here and now. I know it's cliché, but remember that no matter what you're going through, this too shall pass. Even though we deal with death so much, I never want to minimize it.

WORD SEARCH

Find words from article on page 5

D	C	H	I	D	I	F	F	I	C	U	L	T	F	L	H	Y	K	Z	D
Z	H	P	E	G	H	F	R	R	O	S	M	C	B	R	M	D	E	W	G
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Grief
Loss
Headaches
Shock
Normal
Yearning
Confusion
Jealousy
Reconciliation
Difficult
Relief
Denial
Agitation
Remorse

CROSSWORD

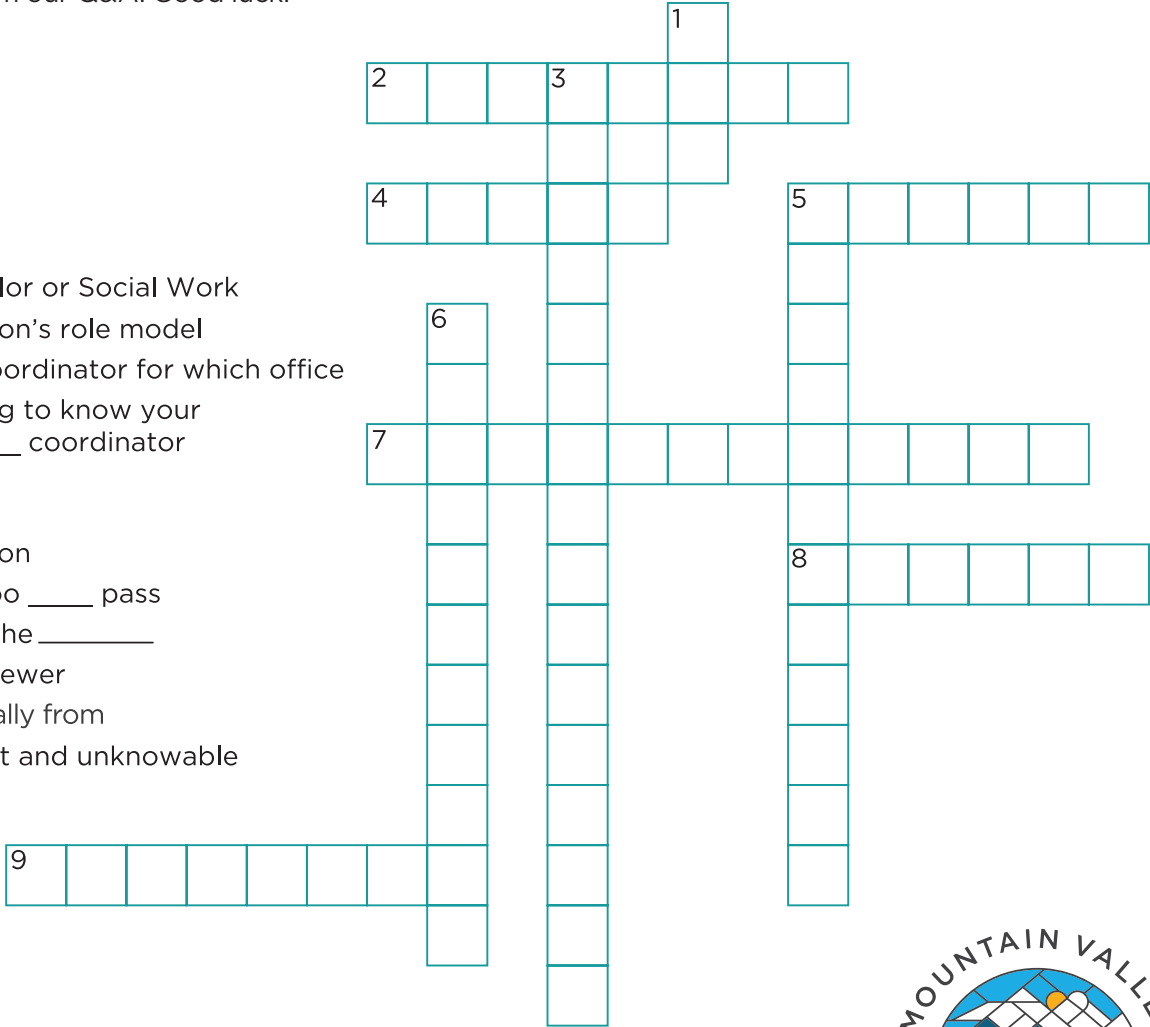
Clues from our Q&A. Good luck!

Down:

1. Bachelor or Social Work
3. Shannon's role model
5. The coordinator for which office
6. Getting to know your _____ coordinator

Across:

2. Shannon
4. This too _____ pass
5. Be in the _____
7. Interviewer
8. Originally from
9. Perfect and unknowable



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

Common dimensions of normal grief

ALAN D. WOLFELT, Ph.D.

1 Shock, denial, and disbelief

Nature's way of temporarily protecting the mourner from the reality of losing someone. Expressing these behaviors allows for survival.

COMMON EXPERIENCES:

- Heart palpitations
- Queasiness
- Stomach pains
- Dizziness
- Hysterical crying
- Outbursts of anger, laughing, and fainting

2 Disorganization, confusion, and yearning

Mourner begins to be confronted by the reality of the death. It's often the most "isolating and frightening part of grief."

COMMON EXPERIENCES:

- Restlessness
- Agitation
- Impatience
- Ongoing confusion
- The "going-crazy syndrome"
- Visual hallucinations
- Difficulty eating or sleeping
- Dreams about the deceased

3 Physiological changes

A person's body responds to what the mind had been told at the time of intense grief.

COMMON EXPERIENCES:

- Lack of energy
- Shortness of breath
- Noise sensitivity
- Headaches
- Symptoms listed under 1 and 2

4 Explosive emotions

Often the most upsetting to people who surround the griever

COMMON EXPERIENCES:

- Hate
- Blame
- Terror
- Resentment
- Rage
- Jealousy

Beneath these emotions is pain, helplessness, frustration, fear, and hurt. These feelings often relate to a desire to restore things to the way they were before the death. It's very important to let the person express these feelings.

5 Guilt and remorse

Guilt and self-blame are often seen in the grieving person as "If only I would have ..." or "Why didn't I ... ?" syndrome. Sense of wanting to change the circumstances surrounding the death, or unfinished business in the relationship with the person who's died.

6 Loss, emptiness, and sadness

Often the most difficult for the griever. May take months before the full force of this is felt. Difficult times for the bereaved are weekends, holidays, mornings, late at night, and family meals.

7 Relief and release

Death can bring relief and release from suffering. These feelings are often difficult for the griever to talk about. To feel relief is natural because death frees you of certain demands and opens up new opportunities and experience.

8 Reconciliation

Everyone is changed by the experience of grief. For the mourner to assume that life will be exactly as it was prior to the death is unrealistic and possibly damaging.

COMMON EXPERIENCES:

- The sense of loss softens
- Intense pangs of grief become less frequent
- Commitments are made to the future
- Experience of the loss is moved from the "head" level to the "heart" level



Grief support groups

NORTH CAROLINA

SURRY COUNTY

2nd Thursday of each month @ 11:30am
February 8th
Union Hill Friends Church
2315 Red Brush Rd, Mount Airy, NC 27030
Fonda Younger: (336) 789-2922

2nd Thursday of each month @ 11am
February 8th
Mountain Valley Elkin office
968 N Bridge St, Elkin, NC 28621
Tracey Anderson: (336) 526-2650

4th Monday of each month @ 10am
February 26nd
Mountain Valley Pilot Mountain office
129 Veterans Dr, Pilot Mountain, NC 27041
Jessica Simandle: (336) 583-8589

4th Thursday of each month @ 6pm
February 22nd
Mountain Valley Elkin office
968 N Bridge St, Elkin, NC 28621
Tracey Anderson: (336) 526-2650

YADKIN COUNTY

1st Thursday of each month @ 11am
February 1st
SECU Hospice Care Center
243 N Lee Ave, Yadkinville, NC 27055
Melissa Causby: (336) 679-2466

3rd Thursday of each month @ 6pm
February 15th
SECU Hospice Care Center
243 N Lee Ave, Yadkinville, NC 27055
Melissa Causby: (336) 679-2466

WILKES COUNTY

3rd Monday of each month @ 6pm
February 19th
Reins-Sturdivant Funeral Home
270 Armory Rd, North Wilkesboro, NC 28659
Tracey Anderson: (336) 526-2650
Melissa Causby: (336) 679-2466

VIRGINIA

HENRY COUNTY

1st Wednesday of each month @ 2pm
February 7th
King's Grant Retirement
350 Kings Way Rd, Martinsville, VA 24112
Shannon Roberson: (888) 789-2922

2nd Tuesday of each month @ 10am
February 13th
The Community Fellowship
2674 Virginia Ave, Collinsville, VA 24078
Shannon Roberson: (888) 789-2922

PATRICK COUNTY

3rd Thursday of each month @ 2pm
February 15th
Stuart United Methodist Church
101 E Blue Ridge St, Stuart, VA 24171
Shannon Roberson: (888) 789-2922

GRAYSON COUNTY

3rd Monday of each month @ 2pm
February 19th
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 Alleghany, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin locations of the Northwestern Regional Library • mtnvalleyhospice.org/grief-library





WELCOME

to the NEW Moments Matter,
our bereavement newsletter,

INSIDE:

Loving yourself through Valentine's day
Q&A with Shannon Roberson
Common dimensions of normal grief
+ February 2024 grief support group schedule



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