



HEALING THE SPIRIT

Summer 2021

1-800-847-7831 | healingthespirit.org



Dear Donor Families,

Summer has arrived and with it, more time to open a good book. There's always a new best-seller to get lost in, but what may be even more important are the stories that are closer to our hearts. There is healing found in telling our own story or our loved one's story. Some find it easier to write out their thoughts, while others prefer to talk through their stories. Alternatively, you could find an artistic format – drawing, painting, clay, woodworking – is the best way to share your story.

No matter what works best for you, give yourself the chance to tell stories from your heart. Each of us has a unique journey like no other.

With hope,

Debbie Hutt, DFS Director

If you would like more information on any Donor Family Service Programs, please contact us.

800.847.8731 | DFS@lifenethealth.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

We are monitoring the current COVID-19 situation in hopes of returning to in-person events when it is safe to do so.

Announcements:

Free Webinars by TAPS
(The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing)

Live

Register to participate live:

Asking for Help When You Are Grieving

August 24th, 2021

12 pm to 1 pm ET / 3 pm to 4 pm PST

To find out more and register, log into:

<https://www.taps.org/institute>

Coming Soon!



The Donor Family Services Team is working towards the goal of updating our "Healing the Spirit" website to include a library of resources and virtual workshops.

Healing Tears



Dear Dr. Leary:

“I have tried writing in a journal about how I am feeling and the memories I have of my sister in hopes it will help me get my thoughts out on paper. But I find I just stare at the blank page. Do you have any advice about how to get started when writing after you lose someone you love?”

Thank you, Struggling Sister

Dear Struggling Sister:

I would suggest you go to your journal like a “safe place” and make sure that you feel it is secure and confidential, a place where you can tell your whole, unvarnished truth. This is a way to honor your sister and your relationship without hiding the truth. Acknowledge what is real for you. This is a time and way to explore and understand the nuances of your relationship.

Take your time, without rules about what you “should” write, or grammar rules, or time spent or the length of your entry. This is your time to discover feelings and connections, a way to process and validate what is real for you. Let yourself write spontaneously, without editing, and without judgment or comparison to your idea of what it “should” be. As you learn to trust your inner voice, it may reveal itself as a poem, a song, or even a drawing. Do not limit the possibilities of expressing your grief and your gratitude.

You might begin with questions that you wish others would ask, or ways that that you would like to talk about your sister, if you had an encouraging listener. I like to begin with phrases that prompt me to just put the pen to paper. Such prompting phrases might sound like:

“the last time I spoke with my sister...”

“the time we laughed till we cried was...”

“the best gift I ever gave my sister was...”

“I remember my sister whenever I see...”

“our favorite holiday together was...”

“the hardest part of my grief today is...”

“what others don’t understand is...”

“what I’ve learned about my sister is...”

“what I wish I could say to my sister is...”

Another way to begin journaling is to write your reactions and thoughts after watching a movie about death or grief, or a film that reminds you of your sister. Or perhaps you could write your reactions to a song that is especially poignant, that takes you into your grief.

Just begin, without any need to “do it right”. Your grief is unique and deserves expression. This journal may well be the most important book you ever read.

Thinking of you,

Lani

Lani Leary, Ph.D., specializes in work with chronically ill, dying and bereaved clients. Dr. Leary has worked for the past 25 years as a psychotherapist in private practice and in six hospices across the country.

Have a question for Dr. Leary? Contact Aimee Evans at aimee_evans@lifenethealth.org.



Donor Family Story

Sawyer Holden Clemmer Mckinley | Organ Donor

“He was the magic in every room and the life of every party.”

On October 26, 2016, 10-year-old Sawyer was awoken by his mother, Jaime, with a hug and kiss. He glowed with excitement over the treasures he had collected from his recent trip, including a hilarious t-shirt he chose to wear to school that day. Sawyer had just started middle school, skipping fifth grade, and going straight into sixth. That morning, he was running late for school but was still ready to take on the day. Sawyer was known to be an adventurous and brave boy.

While in class, Sawyer experienced a catastrophic brain hemorrhage from a malformation of the vessels in his brain. Arteriovenous Malformation (AVM) is a congenital, silent condition until it presents itself, at which time the prognosis is usually grave. Once at the hospital, Sawyer underwent three brain surgeries, but unfortunately, they were not lifesaving. He passed away peacefully on Friday, October 28, 2016. Although Sawyer’s outcome was terminal, his gift of donation created seven miracles. Seven of his organs were gifted to others, making him a true hero.

Jaime describes her son as someone who “people gravitated to” and who “lit up every room.” She also shared that in Sawyer’s presence you felt as if you were surrounded by a sense of magic because of all the happiness and joy he emitted. He was a daredevil who loved books, science, soccer and was a huge football fan. His loving family and friends honored him by wearing rainbow-colored bracelets which were made and handed out during his Celebration of Life gathering.

Jaime recently authored a book — “Heartbroken but not Broken” — to share Sawyer’s story and her family’s journey with grieving. More information about her book is referenced in the next section. You can also purchase a copy at Amazon, Target, or it is free with an Audible subscription.



The Journey

Release Your Grief

Aimee Evans *LifeNet Health Donor Family Advocate*

At many points as you grieve, you might feel like there are no words to fully express the depths of your despair or the complexity of your emotions.

Trying to articulate the words that speak of the heaviness, the emptiness, or any of those intangible and overwhelming feelings that can leave a person almost catatonic. In the toughest of moments, you may feel devoured by the pain of knowing you cannot go back in time or change what has broken your heart. In these dire times, I encourage you to find a way to channel all of this and release it.

Setting your emotions free does not mean letting go of the people you love; it merely gives you a way to lighten the load you carry with you.

The written word has long been known to be a medium for releasing the pain from the heart by pouring it onto paper or nowadays, a digital platform. Whether you write a eulogy, poem, free flow your thoughts into a journal, or dive deeper into narrating your journey in an article or book; writing allows you to process your thoughts and feelings. Donor Mom Jaime Clemmer has done just this in her recently published book, “Heartbroken but Not Broken.” As she states in her book, “I am writing it (the book) for me. For my family. For those I love who love Sawyer as well. For the people my children will love who will never get a chance to meet Sawyer in this life”.

Do not feel discounted if you are not one who enjoys writing or reading to process or gain perspective. There are endless possibilities for avenues to express what you hold in your soul. A unique example can be found on the website, whatsyourgrief.com, with a tremendous amount of support and information about self-expression. If you venture there, check out the PhotoGrief activity whatsyourgrief.com/share-your-grief/#section-1 as a creative way to share what you feel without words. Whether you are a writer, photographer, painter or gardener, each of us can find our own authentic way to release our grief. Just as no two people grieve the same, no two people express their innermost thoughts and feelings the same. Find what helps you and the more you work through the pain, the lighter your heart will feel.