

Serenity

A newsletter for our donor families

QUARTER 4 • 2024



Upcoming Hope for the Holidays Events

The holiday season is here, and we look forward to celebrating donor heroes at upcoming events in Kansas City and Wichita. Keep reading to learn more about each event. Registration is open now.

Kansas City Hope for the Holidays

Tuesday, Dec. 3 • 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Union Station Kansas City • 30 W. Pershing Road, Kansas City, MO 64108

You're invited to a special screening of the holiday movie "Elf" at Union Station's Regnier Extreme Screen Theatre. We welcome donor families to join us for this heartfelt event as we come together in the spirit of remembrance and celebration. Doors will open to registered MTN families at 6:30 p.m., followed by a tree-lighting celebration at 7 p.m., and the screening will begin at 7:30 p.m.


Wichita Hope for the Holidays

Tuesday, Dec. 10 • 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Exploration Place • 300 N. McLean Blvd., Wichita, KS 67203

Please join MTN staff and fellow donor families for a special night as Exploration Place is transformed into an arctic adventure featuring activities for all ages. Doors will open to registered MTN families at 6:30 p.m., followed by a tree-lighting celebration at 7 p.m. MTN will provide sweet treats to enjoy throughout the evening.

In honor of your loved ones, each family may bring an ornament (limit one, please) to hang on MTN's holiday tree. Ornaments placed by attendees last year will also be displayed. The trees will remain on display at both locations throughout the holiday season for guests to see.

Additionally, MTN's Give Hope Share Life T-shirts will be available for purchase for \$5 per shirt. 



Register for Hope for the Holidays:
mwn.org/events

In This Issue

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How Grief Changes Relationships

Adapted from AfterTalk by Amanda Winstead



Grief impacts every aspect of life. It alters how we sleep, eat, work and even how we spend our free time. Perhaps most significantly, grief changes how we think and feel, which in turn, affects our relationships with others.

While many people are eager to provide support to those in mourning, few fully understand how grief complicates a bereaved person's ability to maintain interpersonal relationships. Whether you are navigating a personal loss or seeking to support someone through their grief, understanding the profound effects of loss can help strengthen your connections during this difficult time.

Everyone Mourns Differently

Contrary to the way media often portrays grief — as shared group experiences filled with tears, fond memories and eventual closure — grief is far more complex and individual. Every person process loss differently. Some may withdraw from social circles, while others immerse themselves in work or turn to coping mechanisms like substance use. Others might develop new fears, such as a fear of being alone.

The most important thing to remember is that as long as the grieving individual is not causing harm to themselves or others, their unique response to loss should be respected. If you are grieving, listen to what your body and mind need during this time. If you are supporting someone in mourning, respect their needs and give them space to grieve in their own way.

Emotions Flare Unexpectedly

Grief can physiologically alter the brain, leading to significant changes in how emotions are experienced and expressed. A person who is grieving may not respond to emotional triggers in the way they did prior to their loss, and their emotional responses may vary unpredictably throughout the grieving process.

This volatility can cause confusion or hurt feelings within relationships. A person who seems emotionally distant one day may suddenly express intense emotions the next. To manage these emotional fluctuations, practicing calming techniques like deep breathing exercises can be beneficial. These techniques reduce stress and anxiety, which can help mitigate emotional outbursts. Those supporting the bereaved may also benefit from learning these techniques to help guide their loved one through emotionally challenging moments.

Relationship Roles Can Shift

Every relationship is characterized by certain roles, whether it be one person taking the lead in making plans or another offering practical solutions to problems. Grief, however, often disrupts these established roles. A grieving person may no longer be able to fulfill their typical role in the relationship, leading to misunderstandings and tensions.

Recognizing and adjusting to these shifts in roles is essential for maintaining strong relationships during times of grief. If a relationship feels strained, it can be helpful to critically assess how grief may be affecting the dynamics and make efforts to fill any gaps that may have emerged.

Practicality Can Be Profound

Grief is mentally and emotionally exhausting, leaving little energy for everyday tasks. Simple activities such as preparing meals, grocery shopping or maintaining a household can become overwhelming during a period of mourning. Self-care, in particular, can feel impossible for someone deep in grief.

In situations where emotional support may not be well-received, offering practical assistance can be immensely helpful. Instead of asking if they need help — which can put the burden of decision-making on the bereaved — simply take action. Drop off groceries, prepare meals or help with household chores. This kind of support can provide relief without adding to their emotional strain.

One particularly challenging task for grieving individuals is managing their loved one's estate and belongings. Offering assistance in sorting through possessions, hiring a moving company or organizing sentimental items can provide much-needed practical support during this difficult time.

It's the Long Game That Matters

Grief follows no set timeline. While some individuals may find a sense of closure within weeks, others may continue to navigate their emotions for years, or closure may never fully come. Understanding that grief has no expiration date is crucial for maintaining long-term relationships with those in mourning.

If you are supporting someone through their grief, patience and consistency are key. Small, thoughtful actions over time will have a lasting impact. Similarly, if you are experiencing grief, take note of the individuals who remain present throughout your journey — these are the people who may become your strongest sources of support in the years ahead.

Grief's influence on relationships is profound, but with understanding, patience and thoughtful support, it is possible to navigate the complexities of loss together. Whether you are grieving or supporting someone in mourning, recognizing the long-term nature of grief and adapting to its effects can help preserve and even strengthen relationships during one of life's most challenging experiences. 🧡

Book Recommendations from "What's Your Grief"

All books can be found on Amazon

The Grieving Brain by Mary-Frances O'Connor

"In The Grieving Brain, neuroscientist and psychologist Mary-Frances O'Connor, PhD, gives us a fascinating new window into one of the hallmark experiences of being human. O'Connor has devoted decades to researching the effects of grief on the brain, and in this book, she makes cutting-edge neuroscience accessible through her contagious enthusiasm and guides us through how we encode love and grief. With love, our neurons help us form attachments to others; but, with loss, our brain must come to terms with where our loved ones went, or how to imagine a future that encompasses their absence."

Resilient Grieving: How to Find Your Way Through a Devastating Loss (Finding Strength and Embracing Life After a Loss that Changes Everything) by Lucy Hone

"Author and resilience/well-being expert Lucy Hone, a pioneer in positive psychology and bereavement research, was faced with her own inescapable sorrow when, in 2014, her 12-year-old daughter was killed in a car accident. By following the strategies of resilient grieving, she found a proactive way to move through her grief, and, over time, embrace life again."

Faith Doesn't Erase Grief: Embracing the Experience and Finding Hope by Kate J. Meyer

"The grieving process is part of being human, but far too often, grievers are pushed out of grief and rushed into rejoicing that their loved one is in heaven. Alternately, those who allow themselves to grieve openly are shamed for doing so, often resulting in turning away from faith. It is time for a better way to acknowledge that you can struggle with grief and still love God."

The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief by Francis Weller

"Noted psychotherapist Francis Weller provides an essential guide for navigating the deep waters of sorrow and loss in this lyrical yet practical handbook for mastering the art of grieving. Describing how Western patterns of amnesia and anesthesia affect our capacity to cope with personal and collective sorrows, Weller reveals the new vitality we may encounter when we welcome, rather than fear, the pain of loss. Through moving personal stories, poetry and insightful reflections he leads us into the central energy of sorrow, and to the profound healing and heightened communion with each other and our planet that reside alongside it."

Rare Bird: A Memoir of Loss and Love by Anna Whiston-Donaldson

"I wish I had nothing to say on the matter of loss, but I do. Because one day I encouraged my two kids to go out and play in the rain, and only one came home..."

On an ordinary September day, 12-year-old Jack is swept away in a freak neighborhood flood. His parents and younger sister are left to wrestle with awful questions: How could God let this happen? Can we ever be happy again?" 🧡

Mission

Saving lives by honoring the gift of donation with dignity and compassion



1900 W. 47th Place, Suite 400
Westwood, KS 66205

Vision

Leading organ and tissue donation through excellence, quality and partnerships

Contact Us

For more information or questions, call **913-262-1668** or visit **mwtm.org**

To receive Serenity via email or to unsubscribe, please send your request to **aftercare@mwtm.org**.

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2025 Rose Parade Donor Hero Honoree

MTN is proud to co-sponsor the OneLegacy Donate Life Rose Parade® float and honor a donor hero from our area with a floragraph portrait on the float. We are humbled to announce this year's honoree: Joe Hecht of Sturgeon, Missouri.



Joe was 38 and a son, husband and father. He died after a senseless act of gun violence in July 2020. He donated his kidneys at MU Health Care in Columbia, Missouri, saving the lives of two people. Baseball, working on cars and “California Love” by Tupac were his vibe. He enjoyed a life of adventure with his wife, Melissa, taking trips to the Amazon rainforest and Machu Picchu in Peru. Joe loved being outside with their young daughters, Elena and Isabelle.

“We are proud of Joe’s legacy as an organ donor. We always talk about daddy. He’s a hero. We are thankful to be invited to represent Joe at the Rose Parade®. It’ll be a wonderful memory for our family,” said Melissa Hecht.

The Hechts will travel to Pasadena, California, for parade events hosted by OneLegacy, the organ procurement organization of southern California.

The **2025 OneLegacy Donate Life Rose Parade® float** will be featured during the **136th Rose Parade® on Wednesday, Jan. 1, at 8 a.m. PST.** 