

Grief Notes

February 2024

Love with No Place to Go. by Tim Soucy, Bereavement Coordinator

With the first deaths I experienced in my teen and early adulthood years, there were countless thoughts, feelings, and times that I was unprepared for in my grieving process. What was unsettling for me was how many times my grief intensified periodically for what I thought was no apparent reason. As a young adult I sought a therapist to assist me with my grief. The therapist was kind and a caring individual who explored, listened, and provided me with education on grief and grieving. The therapist shared a statement with me that was transformative in my understanding of grief. It is a statement that I have and continue to share with those who are grieving. A statement you may have heard yourself, “the first year after the death of a loved one is a year of firsts, without.” The therapist went on to list the first new year, first birthday, first anniversary, first holiday season, and so many other firsts I would face without my loved one.

For many of us we just went through our first holiday season without our loved one and now we are in the heart of our first Maine winter without. The

long cold winter days turn into even longer winter nights. In the midst of this, February with Valentine’s Day will arrive. Whether or not we participated in Valentine’s Day in the past, we will be reminded of the love we have for those who were in our lives in very special ways who are no longer physically present.

Jamie Anderson has shared, “Grief, I’ve learned, is really just love. It’s all the love you want to give—but cannot. All the unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in the hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go.” So many of the ways we express our love through actions end. Simple expressions like holding our loved one’s hand, giving and receiving hugs, doing tasks for them, buying lunch or a gift are no longer possible. We struggle with what to do with the love, yet our love for them may grow even stronger with appreciation for them having been a part of our lives. The love itself does not die.

In our year of firsts and living without, may you be able to acknowledge the

love you had and continue to have for your deceased loved one. May you find new ways of expressing your love in meaningful and profound ways that provide selfcare and that honor those who have died.

We all grieve in our individual ways. Sometimes it helps to have someone to talk with. If you are struggling or have questions about your grief and grieving, the Northern Light Bereavement Coordinators are here to listen and be a resource for you.

