

# Connections

A Newsletter from the Family Guidance and Bereavement Program at LPCH

**The Family Guidance and Bereavement Program supports LPCH families and their communities who are facing the death of a child. Our services are offered at no cost in English and Spanish. All are welcome to participate.**

Coping with the loss of a child is one of life's biggest challenges. As the pandemic continues, we hope you have been able to find ways to stay connected to your loved ones as you tend to your heart in grief.



In this issue, you'll meet Cynthia Glasserman-Morales, who talks about the loss of her baby during a time of social distancing and the ways she found the strength to go on despite her family being in another country. Also, we offer reviews for two books that we hope will bring you comfort and hope. Last, to support our youngest griever, we've listed several camps for grieving children and teens taking place this summer.

May you find the guidance, wisdom, strength, and nurturance you need to sustain you during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

The Family Guidance & Bereavement Program

## Parent Reflection

*By Cynthia Glasserman-Morales, translated to English from Spanish*

### My Journey with Grief and Loss after Losing My Nicolás

My name is Cynthia and I am the mother of Herón Nicolás, the little angel who changed my life 7 months ago. His story is unique and full of love. Today, I see both life and who I am in a different way. On July 25, 2020, my whole world changed. My heart shattered into a million pieces when I

was told that my baby's heart was no longer beating. It was ruled to be a random, unfortunate event that happened at 39 weeks. A beautiful, healthy, uncomplicated pregnancy turned into the most unexpected and unimaginable tragedy, leaving us heartbroken.

Losing my baby in the middle of a pandemic while we were far away from my parents, siblings, and family, has been the most painful challenge of my life. My journey with grief and loss has been difficult, but I have faced it. I remember those first weeks of shock, sadness, anger, pain,

**The Family Guidance and Bereavement Program**

**650-497-8175**

## Family Perspectives (continued)

crying, emptiness, denial, sleepless days and nights, not talking with anyone, not even my parents. It was many weeks before I could even have a video call with them and cry until no more tears would come. But it wasn't the same. Not being able to hug and see each other for more than a year is so painful and has made everything more difficult.

Being in another country, far from our families, has made us more resilient. We had to make quick decisions in the midst of our sadness and desolation. We had to find a gravesite for our baby, arrange a memorial in his name where his short life could be remembered and we could say our goodbyes to him. We then had to put away everything that had been prepared for his arrival. We adopted certain rituals like lighting a candle every evening, taking a moment each day to remember him, and visiting his grave every two weeks.

Our small group of friends, who are like a little family to us here in California, have played an essential part in our journey. For weeks they sent us prepared meals and looked out for us. They cried and suffered with us from afar. We asked them for time; they all wanted to know what had happened, to give us encouraging words, which were not always the best, to cry, and to be only a phone call away.



It helped me a lot to read stories about other families who had suffered a loss during my bereavement. It made me feel less alone and like someone could relate. I would listen to podcasts, go to therapy, and write a lot. Little by little, I established a routine that helped me to make a prompt physical recovery. I found exercise to be not only a good outlet for my anxiety, but also a way to boost my energy every day.

Opening up to talk was very hard for me. The first several months I felt uneasy talking about what had happened and I didn't know how to have a conversation without making other people feel uncomfortable.

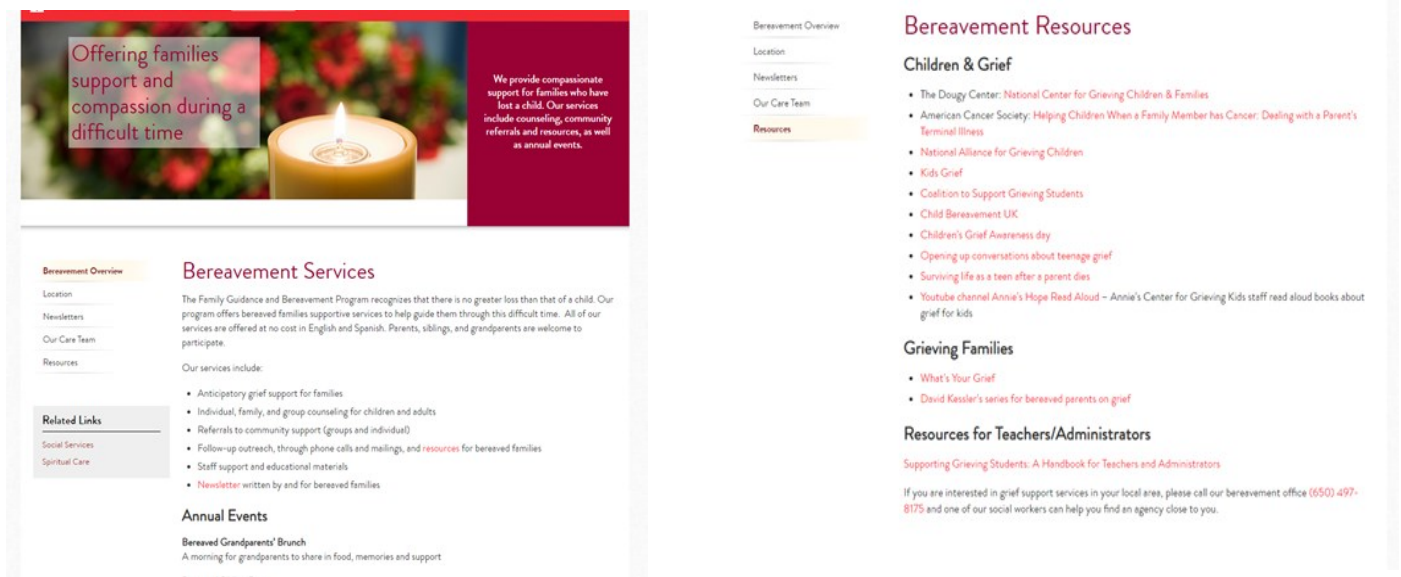
Over the past few months, I have started to reconnect with my family, friends, and colleagues. I'm currently looking for where I fit in. Design is my passion and I am eager to go back to work. I'm looking to create something inspired by my story. This is my next challenge so I can reconnect with my career.

Today, I have learned to live with the pain, to look at life with more love, to appreciate and enjoy everything that I do, to open my heart and tell my story to all those families who have suffered a loss. I send them hugs and all my strength. Today we are mothers and fathers; we must be proud and remember that our children came to this world to fulfill their mission. They are our greatest teachers in life. I have hope and believe that we all have a bright future ahead of us!

## Family Guidance & Bereavement Program Website Updates

We've added some new features to our Family Guidance & Bereavement Program website. Check them out here:

- **General Family Guidance & Bereavement Program Overview:** <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/service/bereavement>
- **Our Care Team:** <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/service/bereavement/careteam>
- **Grief Resources:** <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/service/bereavement/resources>
- **Donation Information:** <https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/service/bereavement> - If you or someone you know would like to donate to the Family Guidance & Bereavement Program, please visit our website for more information.

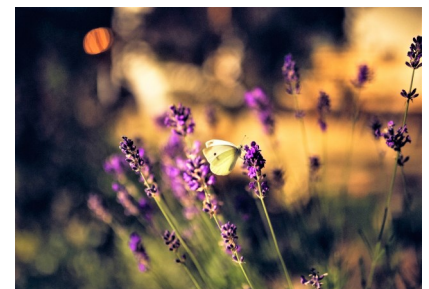


The screenshot displays the website's layout. At the top, a banner features a lit candle and the text: "Offering families support and compassion during a difficult time" and "We provide compassionate support for families who have lost a child. Our services include counseling, community referrals and resources, as well as annual events." Below this, the "Bereavement Overview" section includes a sidebar with links for Location, Newsletters, Our Care Team, and Resources. The main content area is titled "Bereavement Services" and states: "The Family Guidance and Bereavement Program recognizes that there is no greater loss than that of a child. Our program offers bereaved families supportive services to help guide them through this difficult time. All of our services are offered at no cost in English and Spanish. Parents, siblings, and grandparents are welcome to participate." It lists services such as anticipatory grief support, individual and group counseling, referrals to community support, follow-up outreach, staff support, and a newsletter. Under "Annual Events," it mentions "Bereaved Grandparents' Brunch" as a morning for sharing food, memories, and support. To the right, the "Bereavement Resources" section is titled "Children & Grief" and lists links to The Dougy Center, American Cancer Society, National Alliance for Grieving Children, Kids Grief, Coalition to Support Grieving Students, Child Bereavement UK, Children's Grief Awareness Day, and a YouTube channel. Below that, "Grieving Families" includes "What's Your Grief" and David Kessler's series. The "Resources for Teachers/Administrators" section features "Supporting Grieving Students: A Handbook for Teachers and Administrators" and provides contact information for the bereavement office.

## Grandparents' Corner

There are unique challenges that grandparents face after the death of a child. There is both the grief over the loss of the grandchild as well as being witness to the mourning of their own child, the parent. We recognize the importance of providing the necessary support for grandparents.

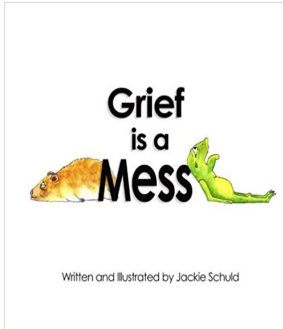
If you know of a grandparent who is interested in receiving our newsletter, *Connections*, please contact Krista Reuther ([kreuther@stanfordchildrens.org](mailto:kreuther@stanfordchildrens.org) or 650-497-8304) with the grandparent's name and mailing address.



## Book Reviews

### *Grief is a Mess* by Jackie Schuld

Review written by Julia Wedeles, MSW, Family Guidance staff member

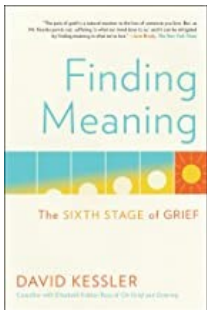


The death of a loved one can leave you feeling lost, unsure of what your grief will be like. Jackie Schuld breaks down the mysterious mess of grief into honest, powerful, often humorous, watercolor illustrations and explores how grief is different for everyone. This book is like a reassuring hug from your best friend; understanding, comforting, and without judgement. The illustrations remind us to be kind to ourselves and others, by teaching us about the many emotional and physical experiences of grief. The author encourages us to be patient in the face of challenging emotions, to treasure memories and the legacy of the our loved one, and to enjoy those moments when we feel like ourselves again. This illustrated guide to grief is treasured by children and adults alike, and is a welcome addition to any library.

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### *Finding Meaning, the Sixth Stage of Grief* by David Kessler

Review written by Jane Zimmerman, LCSW, Family Guidance staff member



Written with his customary insight and emotional generosity, David Kessler's most recent book **Finding Meaning, the Sixth Stage of Grief** expands the work he did with Elisabeth Kubler-Ross to include a new step – the creation of meaning for the bereaved. But unlike his previous books, which were written by a professional expert in grief, this one was written by a true expert, after Kessler's 21 year old son died from an accidental drug overdose.

His book is infused with the depth of his pain. He regrets his former assumption that he knew so much about grief that he really understood it and he imagines himself saying to his clients: "I'm so sorry, I had no idea how much this hurts." But being David Kessler, he realizes that grieving for his son through pain alone is not how he wants to remember him. This book is the result. "Meaning" in Kessler's view is not an explanation or a justification for death. It is what we make of our loss as we continue living in the brutal reality of our pain. This unique meaning eventually enables us to remember and honor with love, not suffering.

Kessler is a religious man and some of his reflections and anecdotes reflect his own spiritual beliefs, but he is at pains to include all grieving people in his thinking about this sixth step. He believes that each bereaved person creates their own unique understanding of meaning, for better or worse. While we can't control death, we can shape its aftermath with this creation.

If you are recently bereaved and your pain feels eternal, this might not be the first book you choose to read. But it is worth coming to in time for its empathic insights and deep understanding of profound loss.



# Summer Scamper

Wednesday, June 30, 2021



**Entire month of June** - Scamper activity of choice

**Wednesday, June 30** - Evening Program

Support the Family Guidance and Bereavement Program and help us to be the top fundraiser for the 8th year in a row! Registration begins in April. Please visit [www.summerscamper.org](http://www.summerscamper.org). Join the Family Guidance and Bereavement Program team, Scamper for the entire month of June and join the evening program on Wed, June 30th. We hope you can be a part of this supportive community virtually!



Our patient hero family, The Caulfields, participated in last year's Summer Scamper in honor of their son, Jack. Jack's father, Sean, was deployed on the USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT at the time, but they had a race on the flight deck so he was able to Scamper in the middle of the ocean!



## The 16th Annual LPCH Day of Remembrance & Rededication

October 2021 (Date TBD)

*This year the event will again be virtual.*

Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford's Palliative Care Program and Family Guidance & Bereavement Program annually invite bereaved families who's children have died *up to six months before the event*. The Day of Remembrance ceremony has always been held in-person; however, due to the concern for the health and safety of attendees, the event will be held virtually again this year. Please join with other families virtually for a day of rededication and remembrance to honor the children who have died.

### Camps for Grieving Children & Teens

**Camp Erin:** Camp Erin is the largest national bereavement program for youth grieving the death of a significant person in their lives. Children and teens ages 6-17 attend a transformational weekend camp that combines traditional, fun camp activities with grief education and emotional support, free of charge for all families. **Bay Area Camp Erin dates include: Camp Erin of the Central Valley, August 20th–22nd, 2021.** To locate your local Camp Erin, please visit: <https://elunanetwork.org/camps-programs/camp-erin>



**Camp Kara 2021, July 16th-18th, 2021, A Virtual Camp Experience:** Camp Kara is a free bereavement camp for youth ages 6-17 who have experienced the death of a significant person in their lives. For additional information, visit: <https://kara-grief.org/services/camp-kara/>

**By The Bay Camp, Sonoma County, August 13-15, 2021:** Hospice by the Bay offers a free, all-inclusive, three-day summer retreat for grieving children and teens, ages 7-17 (18, if still in high school). For more information: <https://hospicebythebay.org/types-of-care/grief-support/by-the-bay-camp/>

Would you like to receive the *Connections* newsletter by email?  
If so, please send your name and email to [bereavement@stanfordchildrens.org](mailto:bereavement@stanfordchildrens.org).  
Thank you!

## Contact Us

### Family Guidance and Bereavement Program

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Office Main Phone: (650) 497-8175

Krista Reuther, LCSW, MPH, Manager • [kreuther@stanfordchildrens.org](mailto:kreuther@stanfordchildrens.org)



### Additional Hospital Support Services

Social Services: (650) 497-8303

Chaplaincy: (650) 497-8538 or (650) 723-7288, pager #27729

Child Life: (650) 497-8336

Palliative Care: (650) 497-8963 or (650) 723-7288, pager #19474

