



THE AUSTIN CENTER FOR Grief & Loss

Hope › Healing › Transformation

Newsletter

Fall 2017



Clinical Staff at Austin Grief



Torch Bearers, Weed-Corley-Fish/Cook-Walden
Funeral Homes



Mary Dickerson with Holder
of Hope, Adam Loewy



Annahita Varahrami - Gala
Chair and Board Member



Khris Ford, Founder with
Austin Grief friend Fran Moss

A Message from our Executive Director Mary Dickerson

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss celebrated its 10th anniversary at its annual Holders of Hope celebration on Thursday, October 19th at The Umlauf Sculpture Garden. The beautiful autumn evening could not have been more perfect for the fun and merriment we all enjoyed. The feedback that I received was “wow”, “magical”, “beautiful”. Thank you to our presenting sponsors Reverend John and Mrs. Fara McMullen along with Holder of Hope, The Loewy Law Firm, Torch Bearers, Judy and Patrick Cantilo, Catherine and Kevin Morse, Cook-Walden/Weed Corley-Fish Funeral Homes, Khris Ford, Diana Resnik and Whim Catering as well as more than two dozen Lamp Lighters and Candle Holders. Your generous financial support makes the important services that we provide possible.

Over 250 guests enjoyed the gourmet dinner provided by Whim catering while listening to the music of Christina Cavazos. Guests partook of Scott James' poetry, the Kendra Scott Jewelry bar, SumXP's photo booth, and Stroop Waffle's tasty treats. The Umlauf Gardens were lovely, and the gallery was open for all to enjoy. Our in-kind sponsors contributed to the silent auction as well as goods and services that allowed our costs for the evening to remain low. We are so grateful for everyone's generosity. Austin Grief's wonderful volunteers were on hand as well—providing support from check in through the evening's close.

I'm especially grateful for Quyen Ma sharing her poignant personal journey through grief. Sharing one's story with others is the cornerstone of the support group's healing power. While the setting was a festive one, everyone who heard Quyen will be both changed and enriched. Austin Grief's foundation is rooted in Khris Ford's vision and determination to provide a healing place for all people who are traversing the grief process. We were honored with Khris' presence and words of wisdom and encouragement.

The Holders of Hope evening was magical—the moon was new, the air was crisp; it was unmistakably fall in Austin. As a young girl, the autumn was my favorite season because I was fascinated by childhood books that depicted squirrels hoarding acorns, bears fattening up to hibernate in caves, and leaves changing colors. I learned to identify trees by studying their leaves in the fall since that is when I was able to reach down, pick them up and observe them up close. This season is metaphorically the one I associate most with change and adaptation. A lot of work happens to prepare for the coming winter—to get through the dark and cold.

At The Austin Center for Grief & Loss individuals and families are faced with the hard work associated with the grief process. Like the autumn season, the grief season has sounds, smells, rustling noises, and eventually, change through transformation. Our clients are given the tools to get through the dark and cold, but it takes energy and hard work---just like nature preparing for winter. Everyone's grief is different and how one learns to distinguish what helps them on their journey toward healing is as different as the leaves and the trees. Austin Grief understands this. The therapists, staff, and volunteers are uniquely trained and qualified to help those on this journey through the grief process.

[View HOLDERS OF HOPE Photos, Courtesy of Flying Lantern Photography](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Financial Planning During and After Divorce

November 3, 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Led by: Caitlyn Biedrzycki, Financial Advisor

This workshop will discuss the common process used to separate assets. It will also review ways to maintain and maximize assets once the divorce is finalized.

Location: Austin Grief, 2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin TX 78757

Financial Planning After the Death of a Spouse

November 10, 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Led by: Caitlyn Biedrzycki, Financial Advisor

This workshop will discuss options for transferring assets to the beneficiaries and the tax consequences of receiving inheritance. It will also cover social security benefits for the surviving spouse and children.

Location: Austin Grief, 2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin TX 78757

Amplify Austin 2018

March 1-2, 2018

Mark your calendars! We will celebrate Amplify Austin Day on March 1-2, and we hope you will join us once again as we honor a community that amplifies giving!

COMMUNITY IMPACT



Austin Grief Collaborates with Girl Scouts of Central Texas

Austin Grief provides The Girl Scouts of Central Texas with training and support for troop mentors in the Girl Scouts Community Group - Behind Bars program.

Austin Grief Partners with Communities in Schools

Austin Grief is facilitating support groups at Hart Elementary and Webb Middle School for children that have experienced a loss.



Emotional Wellness for Teens

Becca Van Tassel presented at The Sterling Classical School to a group of twenty incoming local school counselors about children's grief. She presented information regarding the developmental stages of children, how they understand and experience grief, how grief impacts the family system, what grief looks like within the classroom, and therapeutic interventions and techniques used to help these children manage and process their grief in healthy ways.

Texas State Senate Recognizes Austin Grief

The Senate of The State of Texas, Senate Resolution No. 138.

"Where as The Senate of the State of Texas is pleased to recognize the Austin Center for Grief and Loss for 10 years of outstanding service to the community."



Additional Community Outreach

DownTown Austin Community Court, Asian American Quality of Life (AAQOL) Initiative, and The Breast Cancer Resource Center.

YOUR AUSTIN GRIEF COMMUNITY

A Message from our Clinical Director Becca Van Tassel, LCSW

As we prepare for a transition into cool mornings and early sunsets, I have been taking the time to reflect on how nature beautifully represents our mission at Austin Grief. As the trees let go of their leaves in preparation for a season of rest and recovery, it allows me to reflect on what is lost, what is left, and what is possible.

What is lost?

I always look forward to the first signs of fall; the leaves begin to slowly change, brisk mornings, and the sun begins to change from a penetrating light to a hazy glow. As the season progresses, the

leaves begin to change into vibrant colors and slowly release from the trees. Within weeks we are left with empty branches, cool days, and a sense of stillness. I am reminded of how we can associate this transition with the initial phase of grief. Grief can leave us empty without our loved one. The way in which our lives have completely changed from vibrant life to numbness and pain. When grief informs our whole world, it can leave us lonely and desperate for connection to our roots and core. In nature the experience of fall is very purposeful. Trees need to let go of their leaves in order to prepare for the harshness of winter. In grief, we sometimes need to preserve our core for a period of time in order to one day grow again.

What is left?

As nature begins to prepare for winter, preservation becomes critical. Every last bit of sunshine and water is stored in order to survive a cruel winter. What we see in the outside world may be empty branches, brown grass, and flower blooms falling away. However, the internal experience is a very different process. Everything is still very much alive and fully functioning. As we move into the “what is left” phase of grief, this can be a similar experience. While our life will never be the same again, grief work can help us slowly identify what is left in our lives. Our core group of friends, family, and support help us nourish and preserve, but they can help us grow. They can help us remember that through loss, we can rediscover life and remember there is still love and connection in our lives.

What is possible?

As fall transitions into winter, we are left with a period of bleakness. It feels as if nothing is ever going to grow again. Survival is a battle for months. However, this period has purpose. The leaves fall down to the forest floor to provide enough nourishment for the earth’s soil to grow more leaves for when spring arrives. Each year when the laurels grow and the bluebonnets begin to emerge again, I am reminded of what is possible. In the final phase of grief, we are reminded that we can find meaning and joy in life again. We can transform our experience of the harshness into nourishment for our souls. Far too often, we fear the dark and adore only the light. The same can be said for grief. What I try to remember is we need balance and perspective as this is what allows for our experiences to be whole.

These symbolic associations are powerful reminders that Mother Nature has an incredible influence on our lives. Death forces us to examine the purpose of life. At Austin Grief we strive to connect and

empower those mourning to invest in life again. We believe that our connections to our loved ones are not gone, but our relationship may be different. With balance and purpose we can allow ourselves to love and trust again.

Austin Grief Welcomes New Therapists **Welcome Lynne Levinson, MEd, LPC-S,** **Therapist**

Lynne Levinson comes to The Austin Center for Grief & Loss after 21 years at the University of Texas at Austin where she was a career counselor and administrator. Prior to her work at UT, she was in private practice where she specialized in work with trauma survivors and also in couples counseling. Lynne has been trained in many counseling modalities and now primarily utilizes both EMDR and Somatic Experiencing to support those experiencing trauma, grief and loss.

Like many counselors who are drawn to this specialization, Lynne came to this work through her own personal experiences of loss, including sudden death loss, expected death loss, as well as job loss. She recognizes the desire for both empathic support and for guidance in the grief process, and honors the desire for both deep connection and insightful guidance in her counseling. Lynne also volunteers at Hospice Austin where she sings with Threshold Choir for patients in hospice. She has practiced meditation and yoga for all of her adult life and honors death, as well as grief, as part of a greater whole.

Welcome Laura Babineau, LPC-I, **Therapist**

Laura earned her Master's in Special Education from St. Michael's College in Colchester, VT, her Master's in Counseling from St. Edwards University in Austin, and has training in EMDR trauma therapy. Laura started her career as a Special Education teacher in Vermont and Massachusetts before moving to Austin in 2006. Laura has an extensive background in facilitating support groups, and has been a group facilitator at Austin Center for Grief & Loss since 2014.

Her own grief experience has given her a strong belief in the strength, wisdom and resilience of the human spirit, and the personal growth that can result from experiences with grief and trauma. She considers it an honor to walk beside her clients on their personal grief journeys. Laura enjoys playing music, spending time with her family and hiking around Austin.

Welcome Selena Tyler, MA, LPC, Therapist

Selena Tyler is a Licensed Professional Counselor who has experience teaching others to find new ways of thinking, feeling and behaving that can increase overall health and well-being. She has a keen ability to assist those struggling with grief after the loss of a loved one or significant role or relationship.

Selena focuses on identifying values and learning ways to develop a value-driven life. She can help guide you during difficult situations and to learn new ways of having a different relationship with troublesome situations. Selena does offer mindfulness based skills so you can observe your thoughts and emotions in a more positive light. Selena is a graduate of St. Edwards University with a Masters in Counseling. Her practice includes working with adolescents, individuals, couples and families.

Evening of Remembrance Update

Our annual Evening of Remembrance ceremony is a special gathering to honor our loved ones who will forever live in our hearts. While this event is typically held in December, this event will be rescheduled in early spring. We will make our Remembrance ceremony a meaningful and powerful experience our clients and we look forward to being able to honor loved ones lost.

As an alternative, special ceremonies will be held on December 4th, 5th, and 12th during our last scheduled group nights. Additionally, a drop in night will be held on December 19, 2017 for General Death Loss, Beyond Divorce Adults, and a combined children's group at which any current members of support groups are welcomed to attend. We understand the difficulty that may come with Holidays and we remain committed to supporting and serving our support groups.



Our Community is your Community: Client Testimonials

Take a look at our [website](#) for first hand reports of Austin Grief's client relationships with you... our community. If you would like your

testimonial to be considered, please contact us.

Volunteer Opportunities

Austin Grief has a compassionate volunteer community. If you would like to be a part of transforming lives after loss, please consider joining our volunteer community. There are numerous ways you can support hope, healing and transformation, including child care during our evening support groups, event coordination, fundraising, special projects and group facilitation. Our sought after Volunteer Group Facilitator Training will be open for registration soon! Please contact Rachel Saffer at Rsaffer@austingrief.org for more information.

How can you support your Austin Grief Community?

Referrals, individuals can schedule an intake appointment by phone at: 512.472.7878 or [online](#) anytime. For consultations or trainings in the community please call 512.472.7878.

Shop and give at the same time! When you shop using Amazon Smile, Freytag's Austin Community Bloom's program and even using your Randall's card!

Spread the word and let your community know why you support The Austin Center for Grief & Loss.

Donate, without your support, we could not continue to change lives providing hope, healing and transformation. To make a donation visit our [website](#) or click the link below.

[DONATE TODAY](#)

www.AustinGrief.org

2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin, TX 78757
512.472.7878



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