



THE AUSTIN CENTER FOR

Grief&Loss

Hope > Healing > Transformation

Newsletter

Fall 2019

A Message from our Executive Director

Gratitude: noun

grat·i·tude | \ 'gra-tə-,tüd , -,tyüd \

Definition of gratitude: the state of being grateful : THANKFULNESS

This is a word that I use a lot and an emotion I often feel. It may seem odd for the executive director of a bereavement center to feel this way and perhaps even an oxymoron. How can grief and gratitude be congruent? When I first observed a grief group after completing our volunteer training classes, the group facilitator, greeted a new group member and said that she was very sorry for the circumstances that had brought the person to The Beyond Suicide Group, but she was grateful that the member had sought our services. Grief and gratitude are juxtaposed every day at The Austin Center for Grief & Loss. Most grieverers feel sadness, shock, anger and guilt, but grieverers do not move through these phases at a specific time or order. There is no magical end either. My experience is that there is transformation, and with that, there is often an expression of gratitude.

Much of the gratitude I feel is because our staff, volunteers, board of directors, and donors are so committed to our mission, the work we do, and the healing and transformation that result. I feel so much gratitude to the Austin community who supported our 2019 Holders of Hope gala and fundraiser. I also feel gratitude for the family foundations, businesses, and monthly donors who provide the financial sustenance for our doors to remain open. It is only with the dedication of our fine therapists and well-trained, committed volunteers that hope, healing and transformation continue to happen. Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Welcome Scott Van Camp, LMFT
Clinical Director**



Scott Van Camp is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who has been in the field of human services for over 25 years. During these years, he has served in settings ranging from private practice to community-based organizations focusing on grief and loss, substance use and dual diagnoses, mental health, arts education, human trafficking, and suicide prevention. He is a leader and trainer with over 15 years of management experience who listens to others, and partners

with people to identify and integrate their strengths toward accomplishing individual and organizational goals. He believes that healing relationships are collaborative, and are facilitated best through compassion, curiosity, purposeful treatment planning, and a deep belief in people.

As a therapist and clinical supervisor providing individual, couples, family, and group therapy, he utilizes interventions from Cognitive Behavioral, Dialectical Behavioral, Solution-Focused, Narrative, and Extended Family Systems Therapy; while also utilizing training in mindfulness and Eastern practices, Motivational Interviewing, and Expressive Arts.

As a leader, Scott believes in congruency between organizational practices and the level of compassion, clarity, and communication that the organization aspires to in the clinical services provided to persons seeking therapeutic support. Scott believes in celebrating others. He is also a husband, father, musician, and life-long motorcyclist.

Jack Duncan Rhodes Memorial Fund Awarded \$10,000

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss was awarded \$10,000 from the Jack Duncan Rhodes Memorial Fund to expand grief support groups for those impacted by the suicide of a loved one. A new group in support of those touched by suicide will begin on January 13th.

Moody Foundation Grant \$10,000

Moody Foundation focuses on funding projects and programs that better communities in our great state of Texas. The Moody Foundation awarded a \$10,000 grant in support of our school-based grief groups.

Austin Junior Forum Grant \$7,500

The Austin Junior Forum is celebrating 50 years of philanthropy and service to the Austin community. We are looking forward to the re-Grand Opening of the Caswell House on February 28 and 29, 2020. Look for details to come on the Austin Junior Forum website at austinjuniorforum.org. We are grateful for their \$7,500 grant allowing us to replace the HVAC in The Loewy Family Commons.

UPCOMING EVENTS

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

Saturday, November 23rd

9:00 am - 2:30 pm

Austin Grief is co-hosting this Survivor Day with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Each year, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention supports hundreds of large and small Survivor Day events around the world, in which suicide loss survivors come together to find connection, understanding and hope through their shared experience.

GivingTuesday

Tuesday, December 3rd

GivingTuesday is a global day of giving fueled by the power of social media and collaboration. Celebrated on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving and the shopping events Black Friday and Cyber Monday, GivingTuesday kicks off the charitable season, when many focus on holiday and end-of-year giving.

Evening of Remembrance

Sunday, December 8th

St. John's United Methodist, 2140 Allandale Rd., Austin, TX 78756

4:00 - 6:00 pm

Please join us for our annual Evening of Remembrance ceremony to honor our loved ones who will forever live in our hearts. Through music, poetry, ritual, and contemplation, our inclusive interfaith service celebrates the memory of those we love and have lost. Remembrance ceremony activities and child care

will be available for younger children during the ceremony. Please bring a small picture of your loved one(s) for our candle light ceremony. A dessert reception will follow the ceremony.

Jill Arechiga Art Exhibit

Friday, January 10th

5:00 - 7:00 pm

Join us for our January art opening featuring the creative work of our own Austin Grief therapist, Jill Arechiga. Jill works with several mediums of art, and this exhibition will showcase her work with photography.

Yoga for Grief and Loss

7 week series

Fridays, January 31st - March 13th

Rachel Saffer, LCSW and Katy Manganella, M.A., LPC-Intern, RYT-200, will be facilitating an extended Yoga for Grief and Loss series beginning in January. It's not only the mind that needs to grieve, it's the body as well. Yoga integrates body, mind, and spirit. This gentle, restorative, and trauma-informed yoga class offers the space for letting go of tension in the body, and in turn, creating greater ease within the mind. Feel a sense of community without having to speak a word, feel physically and emotionally supported, gain a sense of control, peace and acceptance in the aftermath of loss. No prior yoga experience is necessary to participate in this group.

2020 Professional Conference

Yours, Mine, Ours - When Families Grieve Together with Robyn Gobbel, LCSW, LMSW, RPT-S

Friday, January 31st

9:00 am - 3:30 pm

When grief awashes a family, whether because of death, divorce, illness, adoption, or any other loss of expectation for the future, each individual's needs and experience with grief may come into conflict with the other's. In this six-hour conference, using both experiential and didactic experiences of learning, we will look at the neurobiological unpinning of grief, normalizing everyone's response as a manifestation of a heroic nervous-system reaction.

Attendees will be invited to explore their own capacity for holding the intensity of grief within a family, considering ways to cultivate a strong holding space for all parts of a grieving family. As clinicians and helpers, we are called to the difficult yet important role of seeing and caring for each individual's unique response, allowing families to lean into outside connections & resources, ultimately strengthening their capacity to be with one another. 6 CEUs provided for LCSW, LMSW, LPC, and LMFT.

Volunteer Facilitator Training Spring 2020

Beginning February 12th

If you, or someone you know, is interested in becoming a Volunteer Support Group Facilitator, we are now accepting applications for the Spring 2020 cohort. The spring training is scheduled to begin on February 12th. Our extensive volunteer training prepares our support group facilitators to support and accompany children and adults who are experiencing grief, loss, and trauma on their journey to hope, healing and transformation. For more information on this volunteer opportunity please visit the [Get Involved](#) section of our website.

To register for the above events and for more information on upcoming programs, please click the link below.

[Austin Grief Events](#)

SUPPORT GROUP SPOTLIGHT

Beyond Suicide Support Group

Austin Grief is offering a new Beyond Suicide Support group. The curriculum for this group is based and informed by clinical research regarding Prolonged Complicated Grief (a common clinical grief expression in suicide and other forms of traumatic loss) as well as Mindfulness, Trauma Informed Care and Motivational Interviewing. The curriculum is sequential, however the group remains open to new participants with points of entry throughout as the curriculum cycles through 12 sessions. The group will meet twice monthly on 2nd and 4th Mondays and begins January 13th. Our grief support groups are offered at no charge.

If you or anyone you know may benefit, please have them call - 512.472.7878 or email, info@austingrief.org.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Children's Grief Awareness Month

November is Children's Grief Awareness month. Austin Grief utilizes evidence-based approaches to help children and teens

navigate their unique grief journey. Our services include school based support groups. We are proud to announce that the School-based Grief Support Group Program has grown 48% since the Spring of 2019!

UT Victim Advocate Network

Lynne Levinson, LPC-S, presented to the faculty and staff of the University of Texas Victim Advocate Network who are the first responders to student crisis on campus. The three hour training is entitled, 'Responding to Grief & Trauma in Crisis - Tending to Ourselves and Others'.

YOUR AUSTIN GRIEF COMMUNITY

A Message from our Clinical Director

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year and...

For many people, the holiday season poses rich opportunities for new, intimate memories with loved ones. When we consider the holidays in the context of grieving, there is a profound sense of loss, what is missing, and the seemingly unavoidable call to nostalgia and subsequent melancholy. This 'call' is a comprehensive assault on all of our senses: the feel of cold temperatures and dark afternoons, the smell of pumpkin spice lattes, the barrage of holiday decorating and advertising that inundates our worlds through the internet, radio, television, and our immediate environments. All of these holiday experiences can uniquely prompt our thinking toward the pain of what has been lost in our lives.

On November 28th, 2018 I abruptly lost my beautiful mom. Nothing that the last 30 years of working as a therapist and helping professional has taught me could have prepared me for this. Growing up in cold and cozy Upstate New York, I had always deeply adored the holidays, and moreover; I cherished my mom.

It has always been important to me to practice what I teach; and Thanksgiving (and Christmas) 2019 are upon us, and my mother has passed. To place things in further context, I am grieving, I am a Clinical Director, a husband, a brother, a son, and a father. I am also someone who believes in specific practices related to ambivalence. For me, the working definition of ambivalence has become the reality that people think and feel many ways about the same people, places, and things (including events). An illustration of a practice of ambivalence is my chosen abstinence from the use of the word 'but.'

Rather than disconnecting my thoughts and feelings with ‘buts,’ I have chosen the practice of honoring and integrating them with ‘ands.’ I am a father; *and* I am grieving. I love my wife; and I have moments of feeling overwhelming loss, sadness, and loneliness. All of these realities are compassionately connected by simple ‘*ands*.’ Thanksgiving 2019 is going to bring some of the loneliest moments that I have experienced so far in my grief process (and life); *and* I will also have those rich, new, intimate experiences with my daughter, my wife, and other friends and family. I will tearfully and uselessly reach for my phone in desperate attempts to reminisce with my mom about my love of New York winters; *and* I will celebrate the joys of directing a fearlessly gifted team of therapists in an exceptional agency, doing miraculous work during a crucial time of year.

I will have many thoughts and feelings about the holidays this year; *and* mindfully holding a gentle place for my own ambivalence will preserve my hope and connection to the people and circumstances of my life in these present moments. Compassion in the context of ambivalence could be defined as holding a kindly curious place for both triumph and tragedy and self-compassion requires us to allow a space for grace. There is no light if there are no shadows, and there are no shadows without light. That said, I literally shed tears of grief, smiled about fond memories, and laughed at my own struggles in meaningfully articulating my thoughts and executing proper grammar during the course of this very writing. Grace, fear, loneliness, humility, courage, sadness, hope, curiosity, and even joy all at the same time; or as the song says, “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year.”

Happy Holidays to everyone. Please know that if you are experiencing difficult, mixed feelings you are not alone. I am right there with you, in sorrow and hope.

Scott Van Camp, LMFT
Clinical Director
The Austin Center for Grief & Loss

In loving memory;
Joan Van Camp
1942-2018

Welcome Bilingual Service Coordinator Vanessa Staley

Austin Grief is happy to welcome Vanessa Staley to the team as our full time bilingual Spanish Service Coordinator. When a client calls for services Vanessa is the caring voice that answers. Vanessa has a degree in Sociology from St. Edward’s University. She worked in the

private sector for several years before leaving to pursue more meaningful work that she was truly passionate about. Working with youth and families for over a decade in the areas of mental health, homelessness, trauma and abuse she uses a client-centered approach to focus on achieving measurable and sustainable results for clients while being compassionate and caring. In her spare time she enjoys traveling with her family and spending time near the ocean and or mountains.



Welcome Group Coordinator Julie Biechlin, LMSW



Julie Biechlin comes to Austin Grief after 22 years as a Disability Specialist with the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services-Disability Determination Services. Prior to this, she worked with several agencies in the field of social work. Her personal experience with spousal loss and mental illness of a family member has drawn her to this field of work. Her passion lies in sharing what she has learned through her experience with grief, loss and trauma and new beginnings.

Welcome Therapist Nadia Velasquez, LCSW, ACHP-SW

Nadia Velasquez is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Nadia has over 3 years experience working as a Hospice Austin Social Worker, providing anticipatory grief and loss support to patients and families as they cope with a terminal prognosis. More recently, Nadia provides mental health counseling to home-bound adults. Nadia has extensive experience working with older adults in areas of mental health, aging, adjustment, chronic illness, disability, trauma, grief, and loss.



Welcome Board of Director Robin Coopwood

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is pleased to announce that Robin Coopwood has joined its Board of Directors. Robin is an attorney in the Austin area. Initially practicing employment litigation with Fulbright and Jaworski, LLP in Houston then Austin, she later changed her law focus to Wills, Trusts, Probate, Estate Administration, as well as litigation in these areas, and has her own office, The Law Office of Robin W. Coopwood. Robin grew up in Austin attending Murchison Junior High and Anderson High School. She married her high school sweetheart, Ben Coopwood, M.D., and they have three children. During middle school, Robin witnessed a shooting that resulted in the death of her teacher. Back in that time, therapy or counseling for such a traumatic event was not available for teenagers. Coming forward to today and her practice in probate, she sees many people in the grieving the loss of a spouse or parent. Many times too, there are minor children who have lost their parent. When she found out how The Austin Center for Grief & Loss not only provides amazing counseling for grieving adults, but also administers to children and teens who suffer such a loss, she was on board to help out in any way possible.

Volunteer Spotlight Lisa Keefauver, MSW

Over the past two decades, Lisa has served as a social worker, therapist, director, clinical supervisor, mentor, and co-founder of several mission-driven, non-profit organizations. She has translated her personal pain, the death of her husband in 2011 and a close friend a few years later, and her professional lessons to launch her most recent venture, [Reimagining Grief](#). Lisa shares her recent



volunteer experience at Austin Grief, for which she produced *Telling Our Stories*.

"There is nothing more moving and powerful than holding space for someone and bearing witness to their story. I recently had the absolute privilege of doing just that for my first volunteer role at The Austin Center for Grief & Loss. I am sincerely grateful to the staff, clients, and volunteers that

trusted me to help tell their stories of grief and loss and the impact the Center has had on their lives. I was moved to see their stories displayed on storyboards at the beautiful Holders of Hope Gala event at The Umlauf Sculpture Garden in October.

One of those conversations turned immediately into a friendship. Fellow social worker and Austin Grief volunteer, Rachel Carnahan, and I share a deep passion and mission to change the narratives of grief. Rachel was recently featured on my podcast, which you can find at [Reimagininggrief.com](https://reimagininggrief.com).



In this podcast episode, we had a profoundly important conversation about the types and scope of grief, what it means to support and bear witness to someone experiencing pain and loss, and referenced the important work of Austin Grief in the healing journey of families."

Find out more at [Reimagining Grief](https://reimagininggrief.com), follow Lisa's work at [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) or subscribe to her podcast on [Apple Podcast](#), [Spotify](#), or [GooglePlay](#).

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, event coordination, fundraising, gardening, and as a board committee member. For more information on volunteering please visit the [Get Involved](#) section of our website and contact Regina Smith at rsmith@austingrief.org.

Holder of Hope Giving Circle

Please financially support The Austin Center for Grief & Loss and become a Holder of Hope Giving Circle member. Hope can be fleeting for those experiencing a loss - death, divorce, or other tragedy. A death often leaves people isolated and alone. By contributing a gift of \$10, \$25, \$50, or \$100 per month, you will become a Holder of Hope Giving Circle member. You will help sustain our important mission and work.

On behalf of our clients, staff, and board of directors, thank you for your support and for helping The Austin Center for Grief & Loss bring about transformation in the lives of our clients and making aspirations, ambitions, expectations and dreams possible again.

[Holder of Hope Giving Circle](#)

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.

Sponsor Holders of Hope 2019. For more information visit our website, [Holders of Hope](#).

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.

Holder of Hope Giving Circle, by contributing a gift of \$10, \$25, \$50, or \$100 per month, you will become a [Holder of Hope Giving Circle](#) member and will help sustain the much-needed work of providing hope, healing, and transformation.

[DONATE TODAY](#)

www.AustinGrief.org

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