



PALLIATIVE MANITOBA THERE TO HELP DURING TOUGH TIMES

By Wendy King for the Free Press

Significant loss is one of the most difficult life events, whether it comes suddenly or as a consequence of long-term illness.

Kelly Kluger, acting executive director of Palliative Manitoba, says many people are not aware that bereavement is part of the spectrum of palliative care and that province-wide, Palliative Manitoba is there to help, offering one-to-one support from well-screened, trained volunteers who have undergone 24 hours of training.

When someone is in need of bereavement support, they can reach out and be matched with a volunteer who will

call them with telephone support once a week or more often at the start, if desired.

“Clients like to be in the comfort of their own home and anonymity is important for some people,” Kluger says. This service can be essential to people who don’t want to burden other family members or who feel they cannot share certain aspects of their grief.

“The volunteer comes without history or any judgment. They are just open to listening so clients feel like they can talk about their grief openly and be with someone who knows there is no timeline for grief,” she says.

Palliative Manitoba stresses that each person’s journey will be different, and that there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

“We describe grief as a roller coaster or a river that

travels its own way and it can be very unpredictable,” she says.

Kluger has some gentle suggestions for those who wish to offer support to someone in grief.

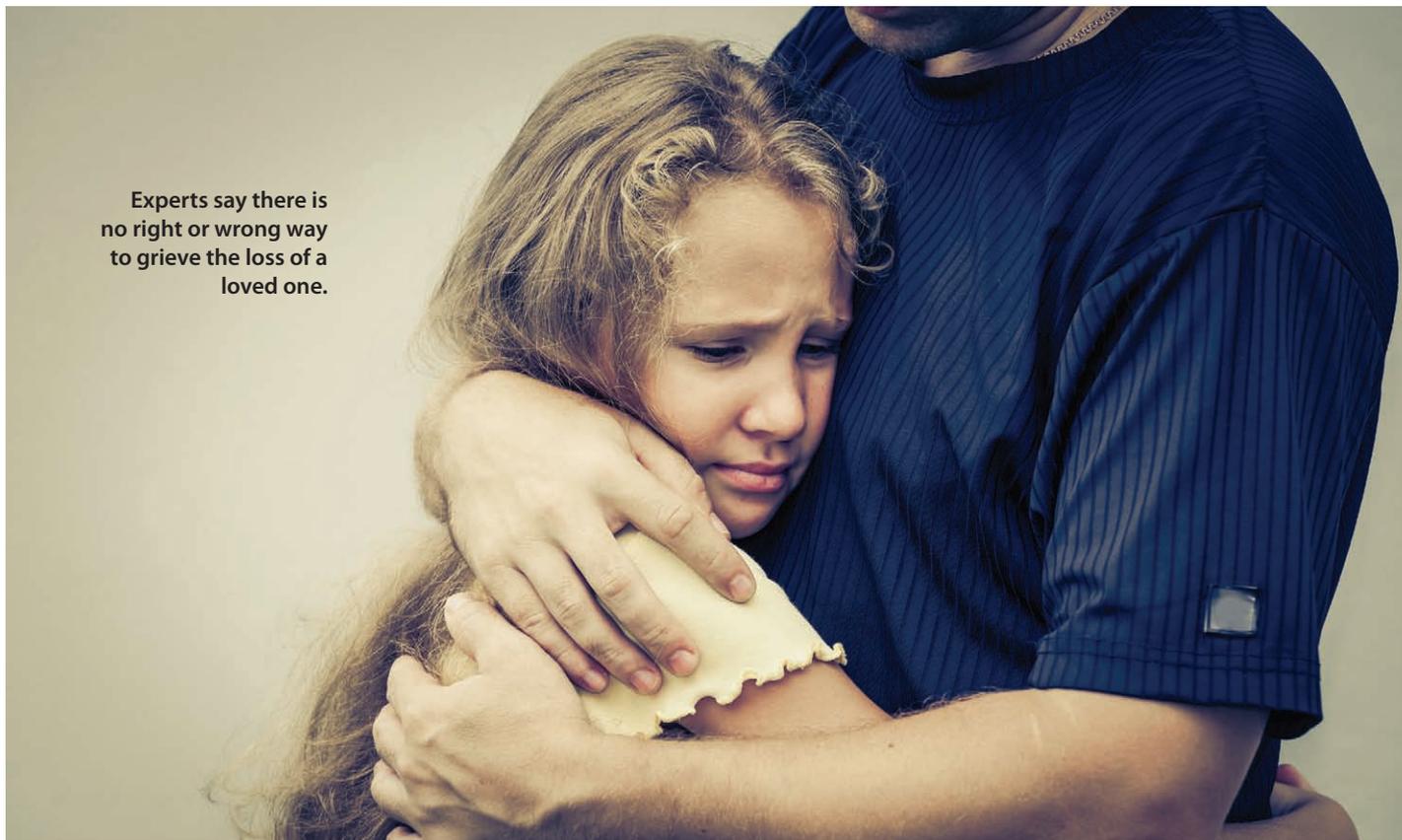
“Individuals really just want someone to be present and listen, allowing them to share what they feel able to share in that moment -- it’s really as simple as that,” she says.

She says that many clients want to have their loved one referred to by name and hear stories about them.

Palliative Manitoba also offers no-charge public grief seminars throughout the year in partnership with Cropo and Chapel Lawn funeral homes featuring expert speakers.

Support groups for children aged nine to 12 and 13 to

Experts say there is no right or wrong way to grieve the loss of a loved one.



“If there is one thing that we can offer to people in bereavement, it’s just to be kind to yourself and to remember to do self-care. Grief never really goes away – we just adapt to a new normal.”

17 are also available and take place at the same time that their parents are in a nearby room, providing the child or teen with the support and tools they need to cope.

Kluger says that Canadian Virtual Hospice is another valuable service, available 24-hours online.

“You can ask questions and get a response back,” she says. “They are a wonderful resource with articles, videos and a new online tool called mygrief.ca.”

Kluger says that if none of the resources at Palliative Manitoba fit, they can connect people to other outside resources.

When Peter lost his wife unexpectedly, he had more than his own loss to deal with — his sons had also lost their mother. He says the funeral home shared valuable information.

“I received an information package which included a pamphlet from Palliative Manitoba,” he says.

He first reached out for help through his employee assistance program.

“I went through some sessions with them, both myself and my boys, but we decided that we needed more and called Palliative Manitoba,” he says.

These early steps showed him that he needed to talk to people. Palliative Manitoba helped him to understand that he wasn’t alone.

“The first contact was by phone, explaining my situation and we

had a face-to-face meeting with them at their offices at Deer Lodge Centre, both myself and my boys,” he says.

“[What] I was learning was that I was doing the right things and it was great to have somebody who was a step back from the process to guide you through that and reassure you.”

Peter and his children joined workshop sessions designed for parents and kids and later, the boys attended a special two-night “grief camp” at Camp Arnes.

“It was a combination of horseback riding, wall climbing, zipline and grief workshops,” he says.

“The more that we talked about it later on, you could tell that it was helpful to them.”

In addition, both boys received help from their school guidance counselors.

“The one thing I learned overall is that people want to help you and the best thing you can do is let them help you,” Peter says.

“You don’t have to do it yourself.”

Kluger agrees.

“If there is one thing that we can offer to people in bereavement, it’s just to be kind to yourself and to remember to do self-care,” she says.

“Grief never really goes away – we just adapt to a new normal.”

Information on support as well as training and education is available at palliativemanitoba.ca. ❖

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