



Comfort for the Grieving Heart

Provided by St. Luke's Hospice Bereavement Program

"Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy. Music is the electrical soil in which the spirit lives, thinks and invents"

Ludwig Van Beethoven

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St. Luke's Hospice

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Over the past few weeks, the theme of music has crept into my life in a variety of ways. From attending concerts, to downloading new music and attending a retirement celebration for a beloved music director, I have noticed that music has increased its presence in my life. As I started to become more aware of this, I reflected on the role that music has played in my life and my own grief and healing, and how I had come to rely on it as a tool to help me work through my many and varied emotions after the deaths of loved ones. The impact of music through the centuries is powerful...it touches our human spirit and has the ability to move us in profound and healing ways. The use of music to ease pain has been used since ancient times, appearing in the writings of Greek philosophers Pythagoras, Aristotle, and Plato, and is found in the Bible, dating back to the writings of I Samuel, when David plays the Lyre in order to make King Saul feel better. Native Americans and other indigenous groups have used music to enhance traditional healing practices for centuries. Shakespeare said that "Music suppresses grief" and Martin Luther King is quoted as saying, "Music is the best consolation for a grieving person". Music been used all over the world for treatment of various issues, with the first recorded use of official "music therapy" recorded in 1789. Research shows us that music has a significant connection with emotion, can be used as a tool for self-expression, can provide us with a sense of community and culture, and, when used in grief treatment, can help us maintain a connection with our loved one.

Sometimes in our grief, we get stuck trying to reason, rationalize and work through our feelings by talking. This is normal, expected, and helpful, for we must be able to wrap our minds around what just happened and discern what our new life will be like. Stress and grief have a way of exhausting the body, mind and spirit, and there are times when you may feel your entire being is completely spent. There may be times when our souls are aching for a release that we cannot pinpoint... a general feeling of sadness, heaviness, or just discontent... that music can relieve. It is helpful and healing to let song and lyrics, melody and tempo, take over and do the thinking for us. It is helpful to have the words we want to say already written, so all we have to do is be in the moment and let someone else do the talking. It is helpful to have the beats of the drum and the strumming of strings to help vent emotions that may be difficult to otherwise release. If you have noticed how you respond to a variety of music, you may have become aware of how some music energizes you, while other music can move you to tears, or make you relax; music has a way of stirring up our inner feelings and senses, and can be a powerful tool for growth and healing. Music can be healing to mourners because it helps us to access our feelings.

Hans Christian Anderson said, "Where words fail, music speaks". Take time to listen. Some songs may make you cry, some may make you think, some may also lift you up. Consider adding music to your list of coping tools, it may be an outlet that can lead to healing and comfort.

-Mindy

"Some days there wont be a song in your heart. Sing anyway." Emory Austin