



Donor Family Services Summer 2026 Newsletter

Dear Donor Families,

Thank you for joining us at our spring events. It was a privilege to connect with many of you at our In Celebration & Remembrance gatherings, baseball games, and workshops.

As part of our commitment to supporting donor families, we offer grief and bereavement resources, counselor referrals, educational materials, and information about donation. If you have any questions about any of our programs or would like additional support, please contact us at 800-847-8731 or DFS@lifenethealth.org.

NEW: Donor Family Survey

We invite you to share your experience through our new Donor Family Survey. Your feedback helps us honor your loved one's legacy while strengthening the care, connection, and support we provide to donor families.

The survey takes only a few minutes, and your insights will help shape future programs and services.

Scan QR Code to Take Survey



If you would like more information about any of our programs, contact us at 800-847-8731 or DFS@lifenethealth.org





How to Tell Others What You Need While Grieving

Dear Dr. Leary:

My friends ask me how they can help me cope with the death of my daughter, but I have never “been here” before. I don’t know what I need. Can you help me put it into words?

- At-a-Loss

Dear At-a-Loss:

Research over the years has identified specific tasks and needs of the bereaved.

What those who are grieving repeatedly ask for is:

Information, a sense of control, support and rituals to say good-bye, and validation of their feelings

Those who are grieving need support to acknowledge the reality of their loved one’s death; this takes time and often the invitation from others to tell their story over and over. Ask others for their patience as you tell stories about your daughter’s life and unique personality, or even the story of her death and what that has meant to you. Every loss deserves to be told a hundred times, and you need the support of others who will listen as often as you need to tell your story. You may need to ask for more information about the cause of death or the process of organ donation. In the absence of real information, we often fill the void with images or stories that are more harmful than reality.

Rituals and community support are important to honor a loved one and the life they lived, what they left behind, and how their life mattered. You may need to ask others to remember your daughter by saying her name and sharing stories about her. Ask for specific examples and stories of their relationship with your daughter, and how they will remember her. “Transitional objects” such as photos, videotapes, or a special collection can encourage ritual and remembrance. Ask others to sit with you and share your albums of photos; listen to her favorite music together; and return to places that were meaningful to her.

The bereaved need permission, encouragement, and trust to experience the pain of their loss; listening without judgment or advice allows you to sort through a range of feelings, questions, and concerns. As you sort through your feelings, ask for others’ support so you can begin the difficult task of developing a new self-identity and search for meaning; this takes a long time, many questions and some false-starts but the steady presence of a non-judgmental friend or professional can provide the safety to explore new territory.

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Lani Leary, Ph.D., specializes in work with chronically ill, dying, and bereaved clients. Dr. Leary has worked for the past 35 years as a psychotherapist in private practice and in eight hospices across the country. Have a question for Dr. Leary? Contact us at DFS@lifenethealth.org.



How to Tell Others What You Need While Grieving (cont.)

When others ask how they can help, you can ask for support in the form of:

- Time to feel whatever feelings come up and their patience to be with you however long it takes to experience and learn to live alongside your grief.
- Being willing to sit with your grief rather than avoiding saying your daughter's name or avoiding the subject of death and all that means to you. Ask that others have the courage to sit with you while you cry or question or feel angry, confused, or lost.
- Remembering with you through rituals, anniversaries, laughter, and tears.
- Validating feelings; ask for others' acceptance rather than understanding. No one can truly understand another person's grief, but there is great relief when others accept our feelings as they are without judgment or the need to "fix" them.

These forms of support are essentially about companioning someone in their grief. People who help are those that can be present and bear witness to another's pain. Companioning is about listening with the heart rather than analyzing from the head. It is about staying open and curious rather than needing to share your expertise; similarly, it is about learning from the bereaved rather than teaching them. It means walking alongside rather than leading; and about being still and silent rather than having to fill painful moments with words.

You deserve to grieve in your own unique way, at your own pace. I hope you can use these examples of companionship to receive the support you need.

- Lani

Rose Parade Nominations Due August 1, 2026

Honor your loved one's life-saving legacy by submitting a nomination for the upcoming Rose Parade. This meaningful tradition celebrates organ, tissue, and cell donors by sharing their stories with millions around the world.

If you would like your loved one to be considered, please submit your nomination using this QR code by August 1, 2026.



The Rushfords at the 2026 Rose Bowl Parade



We are honored to invite our donor families to the 2026 Race for Hope 5K & 1-Mile event on Saturday, October 10, 2026. Each donor family is eligible for:

- Two complimentary registrations
- 25% off any additional registrations

Scan the QR code to register for the Race. A member of the LifeNet Health Foundation team will contact you with next steps.



- In-Person registration includes race medal, race packet, and access to the race-day hospitality area
- Virtual registration includes optional opportunity to receive a race t-shirt and medal.

If you need information about the event hotel block related, please contact the LifeNet Health Foundation Assistant Aaron Janke at Foundation@lifenethealth.org.

Stop Doomscrolling!

By Andrew Kruse, Donor Family Advocate

Recently, I spoke with a group of older adults at a community gathering in a local park. They reminisced about playing outside until dark as children and reflected on how “kids these days” always seem attached to their phones.



If we're honest, though, it isn't just kids or teenagers. Many adults spend hours on their devices too, checking emails, scrolling through social media, following the news, or comparing ourselves to others online.

My mother used to say, “You are what you eat.” The same can be true of our social media diet. When we're grieving, a constant stream of alarming headlines, uncertainty, and social comparison can add to our emotional weight.

This summer, consider stepping away from the screen whenever you can. Spend time outdoors. Visit a local park, volunteer, or simply enjoy a quiet moment with family or friends. Leave your phone in your pocket. Resist the urge to document every moment and instead allow yourself to simply experience it.

Giving yourself permission to unplug, even for a little while, can create space for reflection, healing, and connection. You may be surprised by how restorative it feels to be fully present and notice the beauty that's been there all along.



HEALING THE SPIRIT