



At a loss about loss

BY KERI-LYN DURANT

GRIEF is messy, just like life. But help is always offered through Hospice Northwest.

I recently found myself at a loss about how to grieve the death of my father — which is a bit of a surprise, really, because I'm a Ph.D. candidate at Lakehead University specializing in death education, and have been a hospital and hospice volunteer with Hospice Northwest. I am also the camp director of Heartsteps, a grief camp in Northwestern Ontario for children and adolescents who have had a significant person in their life die.

My father's relatively short cancer journey ended with his death in late August of last year. And while I'm no stranger to loss, it was the first death experience I've had in what I'll call my inner circle.

My work in the arenas of dying, death, and loss is both professional and personal. Friends and colleagues regularly contact me for guidance when death enters into their worlds.

So, when personal grief entered into my mine, I thought, "I've so got this."

When my father received his diagnosis of incurable but treatable Stage IV cancer, I shared my thoughts on anticipatory grief with my family and friends.

I orchestrated with 'insider' knowledge my father's active dying process. I reassured my family about what our time in hospice might look like, spoke with them about legacy, about what a human body might go through as it dies, about what to do next. And what to do after that.

I was a veritable To Do Check List on Death.

MAKING MOMENTS MATTER



My schooling and volunteer training at Hospice Northwest had, indeed, served me well — and all the while I thought, "I've so got this."

Turns out, I didn't have it. And the rational, intellectual side of me berated this other, unrecognizable side. I thought, "I know this stuff. What gives?" Turns out, being human gives.

What my father's death and my subsequent 'ostriching' of my own grief means is that I now understand, with greater empathy, what I've been studying and volunteering about.

I have witnessed grief's enormity and power if left unaddressed. I understand the need for lifelong difficult conversations about life and death.

I learned firsthand the invaluable community support about dying, death, and loss offered through Hospice Northwest.

Hospice Northwest provides myriad resources, at their location and on their website, to help the bereaved navigate grief. I now appreciate their chosen symbol of a labyrinth in an especially poignant and personal way.

We have chosen the image of the labyrinth as a metaphor for the journey through grief.

A labyrinth is not a maze as there

are no dead ends and no wrong turnings. There is only one way — forward. So it is with grief. The only way through is forward, with many turns and going back and forth over what seems like the same territory. (Hospice Northwest brochure — Dealing with Grief).

This metaphor reminds me that my own struggles with loss, even with everything I had at the ready, are normal and healthy.

It also reinforces the message that grief is a lifelong journey, one that doesn't resolve but, as Thomas Attig states, encourages us to re-learn to live in the world without that person in corporal form.

I acknowledge that people I love will die.

I also recognize that, as Megan Devine says, it's okay to not be okay. Finally, I now know personally that it's important to ask for help, from family and friends and organizations in the community, at any point on the grief continuum.

Hospice Northwest is one place where such help is always on offer. Heartsteps is a newly developed grief camp for young people who have had a loved one die.

Our residential camp will be held over the first weekend in May of 2020, and is open to applications for children and adolescents aged nine to 15. No grieving child or adolescent pays for the weekend at camp, although it costs \$325 for each camper to attend.

For more information, to apply for a spot OR to generously donate to our camp fund, please contact Hospice Northwest at info@hospicenorthwest.ca or call 626-5570.



KERI-LYN DURANT PHOTO

A memorial is set up for Bob, the father of author Keri-Lyn Durant.

You should know what's in your duct work

BY W. GIFFORD-JONES

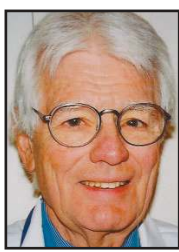
DO YOU have dirty ducts? When did you last look? And while regular cleaning of your ducts may be important for your homeowners insurance policy, what might your ducts have to do with your health?

Highly respected authorities on household air quality have studied the relationship between cleaning air ducts and your health. Years ago, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) investigated whether cleaning air ducts leads to healthier air quality in homes, and they concluded it didn't.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency conducted tests that showed, whether air ducts are clean or dirty, virtually the same concentration of dust can be found in the air. This is because dust and dirt tend to stick to the vents and filters, not blow through the air.

However, there are some situations that may give cause for concern. You might think that only old, unkempt farmhouses in rural areas make inviting homes for nasty rodents like rats. But we have seen exponential growth of rat populations in big cities. Homeowners need to make sure there are no compromised vents into the house. Rats, or even smaller pests like cockroaches, when living in your air ducts, can lead to pest-related contaminants that aggravate allergies, asthma, and sinus problems.

Fans that force air through your home can cause condensation inside the duct. Mold can multiply in these places, and then be distributed



THE DOCTOR GAME

through the ducts to other rooms. Mold is a culprit in respiratory illness. If you live in a house that is 50 years old or older, there's a chance your ducts might be insulated with products containing asbestos. This is a serious problem, and you should call in the professionals and be prepared for a major disruption. Asbestos is associated with lung cancer.

Consider the case of a 33-year-old banker whose chest x-ray showed ominous nodules suggesting he was suffering from lung cancer. The patient refused further treatment on the premise that he was young, didn't smoke, and his symptom were getting better, not worse.

The banker remained well for a year. But then he began to experience the same symptoms, complaining of fever, coughing, body aches and shortness of breath. An X-ray showed a recurrence of the conditions suggesting cancer. But after several weeks, his symptoms mysteriously vanished again.

This prompted his doctor to send the patient to Dr. Robert Rubin, an infectious disease expert at the Massachusetts General Hospital. Rubin noted that X-rays showed the lesions in the lungs were always in dif-

ferent locations, hardly what one would expect with a malignancy.

Rubin's diagnosis was hypersensitivity pneumonia. But what was causing his symptoms and the disappearing lesions in the lung?

Hypersensitivity pneumonia occurs when the lungs become inflamed from dust laden with mold, fungi and spores. The most common culprit, thermophilic actinomycetes, which decomposes leaves, bark and plant materials. This is why farmers suffer from "farmer's lung." There's also "wine grower's lung" due to moldy grapes, "crack lung" from heavy use of crack smoking, and "bird farmer's lung" from feathers and bird droppings.

But bankers don't harvest sugar cane, cure tobacco, work with wood dust, soybean feed, barley or mushrooms. Rubin then became as much a detective as a doctor. He questioned the patient about humidifiers, his hobbies and home heating system. Finally he got a clue. The banker's symptoms began when his bank moved into new office space. Rubin discovered the building's ducts had been blown clean twice. It was on each of these occasions that the patient had developed symptoms and cancer-like lesions of his lungs.

Rubin, still in detective mode, took swabs from the ducts, particularly from wet areas. Analysis showed the culture was loaded with actinomycetes.

But why didn't other workers develop hypersensitivity pneumonia? Rubin believes it depends on the severity of exposure and a person's genetic predisposition. Following cleaning of the ducts the banker



FILE PHOTO

While regular cleaning of your ducts may be important for your homeowners insurance policy, your ducts also have a lot to do with your health.

worked in the building for another four years without any more attacks.

Today I wonder how many doctors would put on work clothes and examine ducts? More likely, you will need to do your own detective work. Know when it's worth disturbing your ducts, and when to just leave them be.

The Doctor Game runs each Tuesday in *The Chronicle-Journal*. Dr. Ken Walker (aka W. Gifford-Jones) has a private practice in Toronto. Please send comments to info@docgiff.com or visit docgiff.com.

Diabetics warned some insulin pumps at risk for cyberattacks

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Health Canada is warning diabetics and health-care providers that some insulin pumps could be susceptible to cyberattacks.

The health agency released a statement Saturday that says the affected models distributed between 2010 and 2015 are at risk.

The statement says 2,620 of Medtronic Min-

iMed 508 and MiniMed Paradigm pumps have been sold in Canada.

Health Canada says there are no concerns with how the device functions, but they are vulnerable to attacks that could affect operations.

The agency says cyberattacks could affect the device's settings which could result in an incorrect dose of insulin, but the agency is not

aware of such incidents occurring.

Diabetics with affected pumps are being asked to continue using the devices as the risk for attacks is low, but they should contact their health-care provider about switching to a newer model that has increased cybersecurity protection. According to Health Canada, the device manufacturer, Medtronic, says the settings can be changed if the cyberattacker

knows the serial number of the pump and can connect wirelessly or if they have radio frequency equipment.

The Food and Drug Administration also issued an alert on Thursday about the pumps sold in the U.S.

Medtronic says they were alerted to the cyberattack risks from external security researchers.

Hospice without Walls Monthly Giving Program

By giving monthly, you will be offering comfort to families who are dealing with a life limiting illness or struggling with grief.

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Why I Give Monthly.

I give of my time and money to Hospice Northwest because my family and I directly benefited from their services.

Their invaluable volunteers brightened our darkest days and taught us how to best care for our loved ones during their end of life process.

This organization is dear to my heart. Please consider becoming a monthly donor.

Joanne Kembel -Board Member and donor

