

All Together Now... Our House: An Oasis of Hope and Healing after Loss

By Jennifer Caspar



Jennifer Caspar
Photo by Jack Zellweger

All Together Now...

Grieving is never easy – and no surprise – the isolation we’ve all experienced this past year has made it even harder.

“What’s different this year is how isolated the mourning rituals have been,” said Lauren Schneider, Clinical Director of Child and Adolescent Programs at Our House Grief Support Center. “By not being able to participate in a full-scale funeral where all the people from their communities could be present to support them, griever lack the kind of support people normally have when they start the grieving process.”

In our society, people often don’t know what to say to someone experiencing the anguish of losing a loved one. A lot of people end up saying nothing at all to the griever. That’s a lonely feeling that sends the message “You should be OK by now.”

When the griever is a child, these messages can be so harmful, leaving the young person to believe no one is there to take care of them, interrupting their emotional development and sometimes taking them off track academically.

Our House is the antidote to our aversion to death. The West LA-based nonprofit has offered bereavement support groups to children, teens, and adults for more than 28 years. Services are provided on a sliding fee scale.

Tragically – and also joyfully – my family can attest to the value of

Photo by Jennifer Caspar



these programs. After my husband, Eric, died suddenly in 2010, my kids (10 and 13 at the time) and I were in shock, going through our lives like zombies.

On the advice of many friends, we checked out Our House. The kids were reluctant at first, fearful of sharing their dark story with strangers – but they went, and happily, they stuck with it. Their groups gave them peers who had also experienced the death of a parent, normalized their experience, and made them feel less lonely.

I attended my own group. And in the waiting room during my kids’ groups, I found other parents with missing partners, struggling to raise grieving children. Our House gave us a community eager to talk about the many ways grief and loss were affecting our lives.

That community enabled us to be honest about what happened, to be gentle with ourselves in the process, and eventually to move toward acceptance, healing, and the rest of our lives.

OurHouse-Grief.org

Jennifer Caspar is owner of Village Well Books and Coffee, a general-interest bookstore and gathering place in Downtown Culver City. She brings her 30-years of experience in nonprofit community development to the space and uses it to highlight social causes and the organizations working to make our community better for all its members.

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