



THE AUSTIN CENTER FOR
Grief & Loss
Hope › Healing › Transformation

Newsletter

Winter 2024

A Message from Executive Director Chris Bonilla

Since joining the Austin Grief team as Executive Director in November 2023, I've been deeply touched by the dedication and impact of this incredible community. It's both an honor and a privilege to co-lead a team committed to making a positive difference in the lives of those navigating grief and loss.

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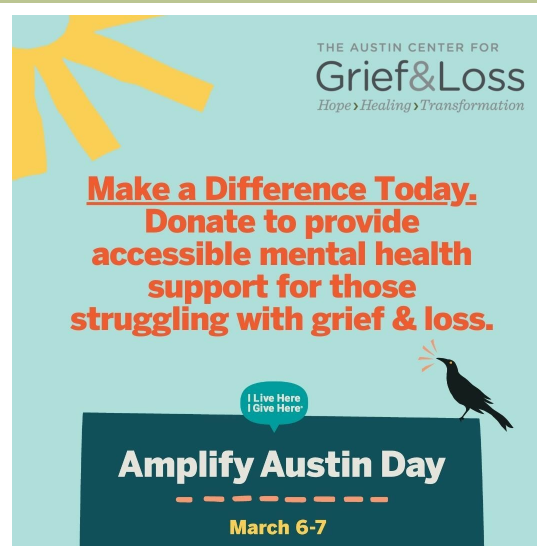
In the midst of the unique challenges that are often faced today, the importance of grief and loss counseling has never been more evident. At the Austin Center for Grief & Loss, we understand the complexities of navigating loss during

uncertain times. Our dedicated team of compassionate therapists are here to provide support, offering a safe space for individuals and families to process their grief, learn coping strategies, and find resilience. Whether you've experienced a loss directly related to the prior pandemic or are grappling with broader challenges at this time, our tailored counseling sessions and support groups are designed to meet you where you are. We recognize the impact on mental health in our community, and we are committed to providing a helping hand on your journey toward healing.

In this collective journey, I find inspiration in the strength and resilience that characterizes our community. Together, we are weaving stories of hope, fortitude, and renewal. The challenges we face only serve to reinforce our shared commitment to overcoming adversity and building a tapestry of healing that binds us all. It is the collective spirit of courage and endurance that lights the path forward, and I am honored to be a part of this empowering narrative with each and every member of our ACG&L team.

Chris Bonilla
Executive Director
The Austin Center for Grief & Loss

UPCOMING EVENTS & PROGRAMS



Amplify Austin Day is 24 hours of giving where the entire Austin community comes together to give and support local nonprofits. March 6th & 7th is Amplify Austin's 24 hours of giving! **Early giving happening NOW** through March 6th. The Austin Center for Grief & Loss has an important **goal of \$20,000** for this Amplify Austin Day campaign. If each person in our Austin Grief community donated \$5 to \$10 we can [reach our goal!](#)

Early Giving starts NOW!



OFFERING
CULTURALLY
APPROPRIATE GRIEF
SUPPORT TO THE
LATINO COMMUNITY

AUSTIN GRIEF
TALKS

Presented by:
Jocelyn Chamra-Barrera, LCSW

Friday, March 1, 2024 | 12:00 - 1:30 PM
Held Virtually on Zoom

Provided by: The Austin Center for Grief
& Loss

1.5 CEUs Included for LPC, LMFT, LCSW

Introducing **Austin Grief Talks**, a series of virtual training sessions hosted by The Austin Center for Grief & Loss. These quarterly sessions, held on Fridays from 12 pm to 1:30 pm, provide a valuable platform for therapists, students, and the community to delve into diverse topics related to grief services and competency. Participants can earn 1.5 CEUs, making these sessions particularly beneficial for LPCs, LMSWs, LCSWs, and LMFTs. Join us in fostering a supportive and knowledgeable community focused on enhancing grief awareness and therapeutic skills. [Presented by: Jocelyn Chamra-Barrera, LCSW Friday, March 1, 2024 | 12:00 - 1:30 PM via Zoom.](#)



Beginning March 27th, 2024, Elaine Dunn, LCSW-S and Joey Fechtel, NCC, LPC-Associate will co-lead a 12-week “Navigating Grief” therapy group that will meet on **Wednesdays 12-1:30pm.**

This group will be focused on charting our way in the challenging and beautiful emotions that make us human. In this group, we will use the Brené Brown bestseller *Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of the Human Experience* to help articulate our own unique emotional experiences as they relate to and inform our grief experiences after the death loss of a loved one. This group will use discussion, creative writing, and creative expression activities to search deeper to find more understanding of yourself and forge pathways of connection. This group is open to individuals coping with loss of all types. Call 512-472-7878.



Please join us for our annual [Evening of Remembrance](#) ceremony to honor our loved ones who will forever live in our hearts. Through music, poetry, ritual, and contemplation, our interfaith service celebrates the memory of those we love and have lost.

Remembrance Ceremony activities and child care will be available for younger children during the ceremony. Please bring a small picture or memento of your loved one(s) for our candlelight ceremony.

Sunday, April 21st, 2024
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.
St. John's United Methodist
2140 Allandale Rd., Austin, TX 78756

COMMUNITY IMPACT





Community Connections

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is often called to offer immediate and crisis-based grief support to various community sites as well as to provide psychoeducation about grief and loss.

- In November 2023 **Ariana Valadez, LMFT-Associate** represented ACGL at the Region 13 Education Service Center as part of mental health resource fair for parents.
- In November 2023 **Christi Neville, LPC** provided a presentation and discussion on Grief 101 for staff at the First United Methodist Church.
- In January 2024 **Lynne Levinson, LPC** and **Jessica Marquez, LCSW** provided grief support for a local hotel that experienced the death of a co-worker.
- In January 2024 **Rachel Saffer, LCSW-S** and **Joey Fechtel, NCC, LPC-Associate** provided grief support for staff at Shadow Cats.
- In January 2024 **Rachel Saffer, LCSW-S** provided a psychoeducation presentation and discussion for interns at APD Victim Services.

YOUR AUSTIN GRIEF COMMUNITY



Grief and Loss Support Groups

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss offers 17 support groups and counting, both virtually and in person. Groups meet for one hour twice per month.

Each group is facilitated by two trained volunteers and supervised by a licensed clinician. Groups are kept small to foster emotional safety and offer time to attend appropriately to each group member.

Virtual Groups

- Adult Death Loss
- Bereaved Spouses & Partners
- Adult Parent Loss
- Women's Mother Loss
- Adult Death Loss
- Bereaved Parents
- Beyond Divorce
- Beyond Suicide
- LGBTQIA+ Grief Support

In-person Groups

- Adult Death Loss
- Women's Mother Loss

To join please call 512.472.7878.



THE AUSTIN CENTER FOR

Grief&Loss

Hope > Healing > Transformation

512-472-7878

info@austingrief.org

www.austingrief.org

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss offers 14 support groups, both virtually and in person. Each group is facilitated by two trained volunteers and supervised by a licensed clinician. Groups are kept small to foster emotional safety and offer time to attend appropriately to each group member. If someone you know needs support, please call.

Individual Counseling Services

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss offers individual, couples, and family therapy for both adults and children. Our therapists have training specific to grief and loss in children and adults. We strive to help anyone in need of hope and healing, regardless of one's ability to pay. We offer a sliding fee structure for those in need and a care assistance subsidy.

AUSTIN GRIEF TEAM

A Message from Dr. Pamela A. Malone, LCSW-S, Fellow in Thanatology



It is with a heavy heart that I inform you of my resignation as Clinical Director at The Austin Center for Grief & Loss, effective 2/1/24. I have so enjoyed working with a strong and compassionate core staff over the past couple of years as we improved and built on our programs and services offered to grieving people. All organizations consist of the people who work in them. They are the heart and soul of the work. Clients learn about The Austin Center for Grief & Loss through the marketing efforts of our Event Coordinator, call or email our Intake Care Coordinator who listens with compassion and care to the story of pain that brings them to the center and schedules them with one of our therapists to assess for individual, couple, family, or support group intake.

If a client is seeking a support group, they can join one of the 16 support groups available and meet our volunteer facilitators who guide the groups and who are trained and overseen by our Volunteer Coordinator. None of this could occur without the support of our Administrative Assistant, and our Operations Director who keeps the center humming. In the role of Clinical Director, I have had the privilege of providing clinical supervision and consultation to our contract therapists and full-time staff therapists. I remain grateful for the opportunity to bear witness to their clients' narratives of grief and loss as well as hope and healing. Our therapists are the heartbeat of what happens at The Austin Center for Grief & Loss. They provide an emotionally safe space that allows grieving clients to feel seen, feel heard, and feel felt. Loss is a universal experience. Grief is painful. Life can be unfair. Yet growth is possible, even after devastating losses. Our therapists help clients to cope, to adapt, to live life with meaning and purpose in honor of those they have loved and lost. The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is in transition. Change and transition can feel like loss however, the transformative power of loss allows

our staff, therapists, and clients to view and ultimately accept death and loss as part of the sometimes messy and complex journey. I thank each and every one of you for what you bring to this amazing and challenging work, and I will continue to believe in and support the mission and values of The Austin Center for Grief & Loss. Thank you!

A Message from our Interim Clinical Director Nanci Silver-Boice, MEd, MA, LMFT-S, LPC-S

I have a new role as Interim Clinical Director, but am not new to the fabulous work done by ACGL in the community and in Central Texas. February is the perfect time to step into this role as we prepare for new opportunities in the Spring. February is self-care month and I hope you will find time for rest, renewal, rediscovery, and refreshment this month. We look forward to greeting new volunteers and want you to join us as you also look forward to Spring. Do not hesitate to inquire about how we can better serve you and the community.



Therapist Spotlight - Jessica Marquez, LCSW



Today we highlight Jessica Marquez, LCSW, who has been a contract therapist at The Austin Center for Grief & Loss since May 2022. Jessica is a dedicated

contract therapist at ACGL, who brings compassionate care to our clients. Jessica's therapeutic approach revolves around creating a safe and supportive space, that allows clients to take charge of their healing journey. Jessica excels in helping clients navigate the complexities of loss, providing psychoeducation and validation to normalize their unique grieving process.

One impactful success story underlines Jessica's profound work at ACGL. A female client who lost her father, her closest confidante, carried immense guilt for not being present during his death. She was burdened by what-ifs and unanswerable questions that kept her stuck in grief. Jessica's psychotherapy and ability to provide space for her allowed her to work through her story, make sense of what happened to her father, and ultimately find acceptance and some elements of peace.

Sharing her journey, Jessica draws from her experience in crisis counseling for various age groups where she often guides clients through the initial stages of loss. Jessica expresses gratitude for finding ACGL, a space where she can support clients through their healing journey. As Jessica eloquently puts it, "helping clients through their journey creates a full circle experience that instills hope, which can be held for the next client that needs it the most."

[Meet Austin Grief Therapists](#)

Volunteer Shout-Out



ACGL is happy to highlight volunteer Julia Goewey Ruiz this Winter for her amazing contributions to the center. Having a passion for helping others, Julia found her way to ACGL through a KUT spotlight. Julia wrapped up her Volunteer Support Group Facilitator Training in 2019 (and honored her dad's 20-year Deathiversary during one of the trainings) and has been co-facilitating one of our Women's Mother Loss groups since.

"Being a co-facilitator to me is meaningful, refreshing, opening (of my mind and

spirit). I learn from my co-facilitators and from group members who have come through the Women's Mother Loss group on their journey. It's also been a space that supported me after my mother-in-law died 3 years ago."

In addition to co-facilitating Women's Mother Loss, Julia also volunteers as a facilitator of our In-School Grief Groups, in partnership with Communities in Schools—"I've witnessed some of the most heartfelt, honest moments between these kids." A native Austinite, Julia is an integral part of this community, and we thank her for giving her time and talents to ACGL in her many roles.

Support Austin Grief



Holder of Hope Giving Circle, by contributing a gift of \$10, \$25, \$50, or \$100 per month, you will become a [Holder of Hope Giving Circle](#) member and will help sustain the much-needed work of providing hope, healing, and transformation.

Sponsor Holders of Hope. For more information visit our website, [Holders of Hope](#) or email Jessica at jowens@austingrief.org.

Referrals, individuals can schedule an intake appointment by phone at: 512.472.7878 or [online](#) anytime. For consultations or trainings in the community please call 512.472.7878.

Spread the word and let your community know why you support The Austin Center for Grief & Loss.

[DONATE TODAY](#)

www.AustinGrief.org

2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin, TX 78757

512.472.7878

