Valerie's House Family Newsletter

A Message From Our Founder & CEO

Dear Valerie's House Families,

On behalf of all of us at Valerie's House, I want to say how grateful we are for your family being a part of Valerie's House. Whether it be coming together in person at groups in Fort Myers, Naples or Punta Gorda, or joining families online in a virtual group, we are encouraged knowing so many of you have found friendship and support at Valerie's House.

I know I am not the only one who is ready for a fresh start in 2021 and to move forward from so much that happened in 2020. For many at Valerie's House, 2020 was not just the year of a pandemic, it was the year that you lost your loved one. Healing and a sense of normalcy are not going to happen with a vaccine, or children not having to wear masks at school anymore. Your life is forever different. Most people cannot imagine the suffering that you have endured as you had to keep your children feeling loved and cared for during their unimaginable loss, in addition to a time of national crisis. What I can tell you is that you are stronger than you realize, and I know this, because you have reached out to become a part of Valerie's House. It takes a lot of courage to come to Valerie's House. I imagine some of the children in your families might not have wanted to come on that first night, and you might have had to coerce them a bit. I would also bet that many of those same children are now counting the days until their next Valerie's House group night, as they have finally found children like them and a place they belong. We are not ever going to tell you what is right and wrong about your family's grief, as no one truly knows your experience and therefore cannot make judgments. What we can promise you is that you will always have unconditional support and we will build you up so you and your family can see a future ahead of them that is bright and full of hope.

As a child of grief myself, I believe, like all of us at Valerie's House, that Grieving Children Can do Big Things. We consider it a privilege to be in your lives with you at this time. We look forward to a new time of togetherness and have some special group nights planned for you and your family to connect with others. Please enjoy reading a bit about some of our incredible volunteers and families who have come very far in their grief journey. They are here to let you know you can make it too.

Forever your friend,

Angela Melvin | Founder and CEO of Valerie’s House
angela@valeriesthouse.org

Valerie's House Family Newsletter

A Message From Our Founder & CEO

Dear Valerie's House Families,

On behalf of all of us at Valerie's House, I want to say how grateful we are for your family being a part of Valerie's House. Whether it be coming together in person at groups in Fort Myers, Naples or Punta Gorda, or joining families online in a virtual group, we are encouraged knowing so many of you have found friendship and support at Valerie's House.

I know I am not the only one who is ready for a fresh start in 2021 and to move forward from so much that happened in 2020. For many at Valerie's House, 2020 was not just the year of a pandemic, it was the year that you lost your loved one. Healing and a sense of normalcy are not going to happen with a vaccine, or children not having to wear masks at school anymore. Your life is forever different. Most people cannot imagine the suffering that you have endured as you had to keep your children feeling loved and cared for during their unimaginable loss, in addition to a time of national crisis. What I can tell you is that you are stronger than you realize, and I know this, because you have reached out to become a part of Valerie's House. It takes a lot of courage to come to Valerie's House. I imagine some of the children in your families might not have wanted to come on that first night, and you might have had to coerce them a bit. I would also bet that many of those same children are now counting the days until their next Valerie's House group night, as they have finally found children like them and a place they belong. We are not ever going to tell you what is right and wrong about your family's grief, as no one truly knows your experience and therefore cannot make judgments. What we can promise you is that you will always have unconditional support and we will build you up so you and your family can see a future ahead of them that is bright and full of hope.

As a child of grief myself, I believe, like all of us at Valerie's House, that Grieving Children Can do Big Things. We consider it a privilege to be in your lives with you at this time. We look forward to a new time of togetherness and have some special group nights planned for you and your family to connect with others. Please enjoy reading a bit about some of our incredible volunteers and families who have come very far in their grief journey. They are here to let you know you can make it too.

Forever your friend,

Angela Melvin | Founder and CEO of Valerie’s House
angela@valeriesthouse.org

Valerie's House Family Newsletter

A Message From Our Founder & CEO

Dear Valerie's House Families,

On behalf of all of us at Valerie's House, I want to say how grateful we are for your family being a part of Valerie's House. Whether it be coming together in person at groups in Fort Myers, Naples or Punta Gorda, or joining families online in a virtual group, we are encouraged knowing so many of you have found friendship and support at Valerie's House.

I know I am not the only one who is ready for a fresh start in 2021 and to move forward from so much that happened in 2020. For many at Valerie's House, 2020 was not just the year of a pandemic, it was the year that you lost your loved one. Healing and a sense of normalcy are not going to happen with a vaccine, or children not having to wear masks at school anymore. Your life is forever different. Most people cannot imagine the suffering that you have endured as you had to keep your children feeling loved and cared for during their unimaginable loss, in addition to a time of national crisis. What I can tell you is that you are stronger than you realize, and I know this, because you have reached out to become a part of Valerie's House. It takes a lot of courage to come to Valerie's House. I imagine some of the children in your families might not have wanted to come on that first night, and you might have had to coerce them a bit. I would also bet that many of those same children are now counting the days until their next Valerie's House group night, as they have finally found children like them and a place they belong. We are not ever going to tell you what is right and wrong about your family's grief, as no one truly knows your experience and therefore cannot make judgments. What we can promise you is that you will always have unconditional support and we will build you up so you and your family can see a future ahead of them that is bright and full of hope.

As a child of grief myself, I believe, like all of us at Valerie's House, that Grieving Children Can do Big Things. We consider it a privilege to be in your lives with you at this time. We look forward to a new time of togetherness and have some special group nights planned for you and your family to connect with others. Please enjoy reading a bit about some of our incredible volunteers and families who have come very far in their grief journey. They are here to let you know you can make it too.

Forever your friend,

Angela Melvin | Founder and CEO of Valerie’s House
angela@valeriesthouse.org
After losing her father at just nine years old, Jen dedicated her life’s work to helping others through a career in the nonprofit sector. While working with other nonprofit organizations in Naples, Florida, Jen had often heard about Angela and her work with Valerie’s House.

“I was immediately drawn to it,” said Jen. “I exactly wasn’t sure how yet, but I knew I wanted to be involved.”

When Angela and Jen finally met, they were both excited to learn the other’s grief story and discover their shared passion for giving back.

“It was just an immediate match,” said Jen.

Jen joined the Valerie’s House team in November of 2019. She is the Director of Strategic Initiatives and a Lead Facilitator and Group Nuddy on Thursdays in Naples. She loves spending time with Valerie’s House families and typically facilitates the Teen group.

In her professional role, Jen focuses on expanding Valerie’s House’s reach through fundraising and relationship building.
In this emotional episode of Grieve Love Heal, we're joined by members of the Valerie's House community to discuss the signs they have received from their loved ones who have passed away. From dragonflies to actually feeling the touch of their deceased loved one, these first-hand accounts about grief and signs from their late family members are honest and bittersweet. Special thanks to Stori, Christine, Bernice, April, and Aman for joining Angela on this episode. Listen now on our website, Spotify, or Apple or Google Podcasts.

Listen and subscribe to Grieve Love Heal at valerieshouse.org/grieve-love-heal or on your favorite podcast app by searching "Grieve Love Heal." Help the podcast reach more people who want to be part of these honest discussions about grief by rating and reviewing the show and sharing episodes that speak to you.

Have a topic you would like us to discuss in an upcoming podcast? Contact Alexa@valerieshouse.org.
Many people have heard of the stages of grief, but more recently, those who understand loss and grieving have begun to see things differently.

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. writes, “Everyone grieves and mourns differently, but there are some steps along the way that we all must encounter.” We at Valerie’s House agree. According to Dr. Wolfelt, meeting the six needs of mourning one day at a time will help you move toward a life of meaning and purpose again.

**6 Needs of Mourning**

- Acknowledge the reality of the death
- Embrace the pain of the loss
- Remember the person who died
- Develop a new self-identity
- Search for meaning
- Receive ongoing support from others

Learn more about each of the six needs in Dr. Wolfelt’s book, The Journey Through Grief: Reflections On Healing, or at Centerforloss.com.

Happy New Year!