

# Connections

The Newsletter of the Connections Program

A Partnership between the Health District of Northern Larimer County and SummitStone Health Partners

## Stepparents Balance “Holding On” and “Letting Go” on Mother’s and Father’s Day

Submitted by: Diane Ingram Fromme

As a stepparent of 20+ years to two children whose mom died of cancer, I've thought a lot about how to approach Mother's Day and Father's Day. My conclusion? These are not the stepparents' holidays to celebrate with their stepkids. Instead, stepparents can cultivate connection by balancing their stepchildren's need to honor their natural parent with their own need to be appreciated. I like to use a gardening analogy to explain my stance. A garden needs a variety of elements to grow and thrive: water, nutrient-rich soil, sunlight, and planting material. While writing *Stepparenting the Grieving Child*, I studied the importance of my stepchildren's continued bonds with their deceased mom. After 10 years of grief, loss, and stepfamily research, I began to see myself as the gardener who stepped in to help the family plants grow. Their dad represents the kids' foundation and rock—he is the soil. Their mom's memory warms their hearts—she is the sunlight. I realized over time that the last thing I, the gardener, wanted to do was block that light from reaching the kids.

Picture this: You're in first grade, and you're one of a few kids in the class whose mom died from cancer. You've had a stepmom in your family for a few years. Two weeks ago, you planted some seeds in a little pot that you painted with red and yellow polka dots. The seeds have finally sprouted greenery above the level of the dirt, and your teacher asks everyone to make a Mother's Day card to go with this thriving Mother's Day gift. You have one plant. For whom do you make the card—your mom, or your stepmom? Depending on your personality, you might ask your teacher what to do, or you might silently make the card for your stepmom, wishing you could address it to your mom instead.

Switch to the perspective of the stepparent: Since your stepson's mom is deceased, you have acted in the role

of mom for years. You pack lunches, drape his feverish head with a cold washcloth, help with homework, run the soccer taxi, and enjoy laughter while acting out silly bedtime stories. You feel glimpses of real connection with this boy who is not your birth son. Should your stepchild bestow appreciation upon you during Mother's Day and Father's Day?



Enter the concept of balancing “holding on” and “letting go.” I learned that celebrating Mother's Day with me might feel to my stepkids like a betrayal, I realized I had to *let go* of expecting them to initiate appreciation. Meanwhile, I could *hold on* to creating my own happiness. According to Jessica Kuhn, LMFT, this balancing act is “as individual as the families themselves. There is no wrong way to honor a special bond.”

Witness the rewards that cropped up in my family:

- I devote the holiday to letting the kids honor their mom, then celebrate an entirely different day with my stepkids. My birthday falls one week before Mother's Day, something my stepchildren can get behind with no loyalty conflicts. Other families have chosen the Sunday following Mother's Day or Father's Day, or National Stepfamily Day, which is September 16th.
- I learn to fulfill my own expectations by planning my special day. I love to plant my annuals on Mother's Day. My stepkids have even offered to help at times.
- I discover that giving can feel as good or better than receiving. One Mother's Day I drove my mom up to her favorite local mountains. Another Mother's Day, I took my four-year-old daughter, my young adult stepdaughter, and my mother-in-law out for Mother's Day Brunch.

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We encourage you to submit short articles (50-500 words) on therapeutic approaches, mental health topics, case studies, or therapeutic book/movie reviews, etc., & will publish them as space allows. We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

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*Connections* is published 6 times/year. The purpose of *Connections* is to offer information on current therapy groups and services in the community; provide updates on services available through the *Connections* Program; and offer a place where information on community happenings of interest to mental health and human services providers can be shared.

Submissions printed in *Connections* do not necessarily reflect the views of the *Connections* Program. Our editorial staff do not check the credentials of individuals wishing to submit groups or other listings. If you have concerns regarding credentials or other issues, please contact the group leader or author of the article directly. Thank you.

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We cannot deny that the appreciation stepparents yearn for and the blood connection grieving children crave are both deeply felt emotions. Stepparents will forge stronger bonds with their stepchildren by creating their own happy days, balanced with accepting what their stepkids offer them over time and with creating new traditions together.

Diane Ingram Fromme became inspired to write *Stepparenting the Grieving Child* (Merry Dissonance Press, 2017) when she couldn't find resources to ease her stepparent angst and help her own grieving stepchildren. Contact Diane to speak to your groups about heartfelt challenges and creative solutions when supporting grieving children. *Stepparenting the Grieving Child* special edition is available locally from the author, [info@dianefromme.com](mailto:info@dianefromme.com). Order the paperback or eBook through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or Smashwords.

**Facebook author page:** @Diane Ingram Fromme

**Private Facebook group for stepparents:** @Stepparenting the Grieving Child (request to join)

**Twitter Handle:** @Diane\_Fromme



## Resources for the Professional

### Children's Grief Half-Day Training

Grief Support of the Rockies is looking forward to offering a Children's Grief half-day training. This training provides information for clinicians about providing effective grief therapy to children and teens.

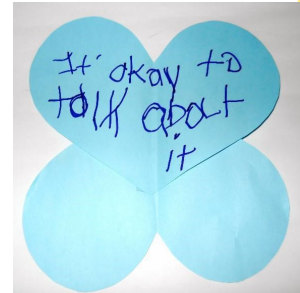
**Date:** Wednesday, May 24th

**Time:** 9:00am-12:30pm

**Location:** Community Meeting Room,  
Poudre Valley REA  
7649 REA Parkway, Fort Collins, CO

**Cost:** \$75/person

For more information or to register, call or email at (970) 235-2076 or [gsrockies@gmail.com](mailto:gsrockies@gmail.com). You can also visit the Grief Support of the Rockies website at [www.griefsupportoftherockies.com](http://www.griefsupportoftherockies.com) for up-to-date information on this and future trainings.



### Grief Group

Grief Support of the Rockies will be offering another 8-week, closed grief support group beginning in May.

Please contact [gsrockies@gmail.com](mailto:gsrockies@gmail.com) or (970) 235-2076 for more information.



## Resources for the Professional

### Trauma Training

#### The Window of Tolerance

This one-hour class will teach participants what this indispensable tool is and how to use it as a resource for both clients and therapists.

**When:** Wednesday, May 24th  
11:45am—12:45pm (bring your lunch)


**Cost:** \$25/person

**Location:** 2120 S. College Ave, Suite 6 (across from Whole Foods on the corner of Rutgers and College)

**Facilitated by:** Dorinna Ruh, LCSW, CACIII, Approved Consultant in EMDR.

To sign up, please contact Dorinna at [Dorinnalcsw@aol.com](mailto:Dorinnalcsw@aol.com).

### New! Group for Therapists and Psychiatrists



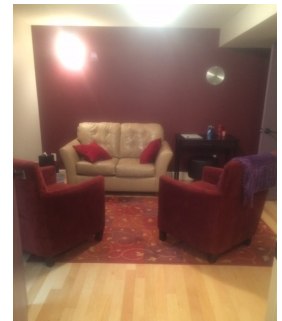
For clinicians interested in integrating spirituality, intuition and energy psychology practices to deepen the work they do with clients. This group will come together to share and discuss powerful tools they can use in their lives and with their clients through a combination of psychoeducation, process and experiential exercises.

The group will meet weekly, either during lunch time or evenings, depending on what would work best for the majority of participants. The investment is \$297 a month for all sessions, materials, resources and continued discussion through an online private community if participants are interested.

To learn more, please contact Dr. Elena Estanol at [dr.estanol@synapsecounseling.com](mailto:dr.estanol@synapsecounseling.com).

### Office Space Availability

Offices for rent at Synapse Counseling. Beautifully furnished and ready to go, but can also be rented unfurnished. There is also potential to rent several rooms to a single practice. Rent averages around \$675 per room, depending on room size. For room inquiry, email [phoenix.rise@icloud.com](mailto:phoenix.rise@icloud.com).



## Resources for the Professional

### Office Space Availability cont.

- ◇ Need part time or full time office space? Check out this furnished office available to use right away! <https://fortcollins.craigslist.org/off/6088391219.html>.
- ◇ Share furnished office (13 x 15) in a charming old town location with off-street parking. Office has newly painted walls, hardwood floors, and natural sunlight - perfect for therapy or creative writing. Other tenants are healing arts and healthcare providers. Available Tuesdays and Thursdays. Utilities included. Rent: \$160 per month (2 days/week). Please email Dee Colombini, LPC, LAC at [colombinidc@gmail.com](mailto:colombinidc@gmail.com) for more information.



## Job Openings

- ⇒ Regular Full-time (40 hours per week, with benefits) **Mental Health Specialist, SummitStone Crisis Stabilization Unit**. Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm. This position is a Health District employee on the Connections team, located at the Community Crisis Clinic. Duties include providing walk-in, mobile, and phone evaluations in response to individuals in need of crisis intervention. The Specialist will also provide regular follow-up and assistance with care coordination for people accessing the Crisis Stabilization Unit.
- ⇒ Regular Full-time (30 hours per week, with benefits) **Behavioral Health Provider, Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders in Primary Care**. This position provides therapy, case management and addiction counseling to patients from two primary care clinics participating in the Primary Care Mental Health Integration Program.
- ⇒ Time-Limited Full-time (40 hours per week, with benefits) **Program Assistant for Mental Health Connections, Child, Adolescents and Young Adult Connections team (CAYAC)**. Time-limited through January 31, 2019. This position will provide comprehensive administration and programmatic support for the CAYAC team and is responsible for overseeing and maintaining effective daily office operations of the CAYAC program.

To view the full job descriptions, please visit the Health District's website at [www.healthdistrict.org/jobs](http://www.healthdistrict.org/jobs).  
To apply, please send cover letter and resume to [searchcoordinator@healthdistrict.org](mailto:searchcoordinator@healthdistrict.org).

## Resources for the Community

### Be Happy

Come learn about the science of happiness—happiness can in fact be learned. You'll experience techniques from positive psychology. You'll leave with tools and strategies you can incorporate into your daily life to create a happy and healthy life.

**Date:** Saturday, May 6th

**Time:** 1:00—4:00pm

**Cost:** \$50

**Location:** Wholeness Center

2620 E. Prospect Road, Suite #190, Fort Collins, CO

**Facilitated by:** Jen Strating, Biofeedback Therapist and Yoga Teacher.



Register in advance by calling (970) 221-1106.

## Resources in the Community

### Women's Process Group



Living as an authentic woman requires that we meet ourselves with more compassion, mindfulness and skill. This group explores common issues we face as women.

Outcomes for members include: deepened awareness of our reactions to change and transition; awareness of ineffective relationship patterns; resources for creating more satisfying connection with self and loved ones; safe, respectful feedback on how others experience us; and clarity of purpose to pursue and cultivate what matters most.

**Date:** Group starts Monday, May 22nd

**Time:** 5:30—6:30pm

**Cost:** FREE!

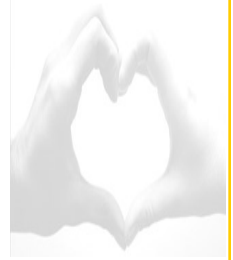
This is an open group—new members can join at any time. There is no commitment. You can come as often or as little as you like.

Group meets at Beyond the Mirror, 1031 Robertson Street, Fort Collins, CO 80524

This is a free gift to the community from the staff at Beyond the Mirror. For more information and/or to join the group, please call (970) 413-2264 or email [beyondthemirrorcounseling@yahoo.com](mailto:beyondthemirrorcounseling@yahoo.com).

### Workshop: Seven Principles for Making Marriage and Relationships Work

Join Suzanne Rudolph, Ed.D.P.C. Licensed Psychologist for a skills building program based on the research of Dr. John Gottman, focusing on what makes committed relationships work. This workshop features an interactive series of lectures, videos and activities designed to teach you what successful couples do to deepen their connection and strengthen and foster harmony in their relationships. Please note that couples will complete all exercises privately. There is no group work, sharing or public disclosure.



**Date:** May 5, 2017

**Time:** Registration begins at 8:30am. Workshop begins at 9:00am-Noon. Lunch on your own. Resumes 1:15pm to 4:15pm.

**Where:** Front Range Community College Student Center, Longs Peak West Room

**Cost:** \$185 per couple. Space is limited to 12 couples. Fee includes a copy of the "Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work" by Dr. John Gottman and Nan Silver.

For more information and to register visit [www.coloradocounselingservices.com](http://www.coloradocounselingservices.com).



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