



pathfinders

you never have to walk alone

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

LIFE AFTER LOSS, MY HEALING JOURNEY

I found Robyn and Pathfinders about six months ago. I was a shell of myself—I could barely keep down food, barely sleep, and often barely get out of bed. Katie, my little sister, was seven months pregnant. She and her kind, loving, hilarious husband, Jon Scott, had just settled on a name for their daughter—Peyton Olivia. On November 18th, she went to yoga, went to the grocery store, got into her car, and died of an undiagnosed bicuspid heart valve.

The outpouring of grief and support was extraordinary. There were over 400 people from all around the world at her funeral. There was so much food, so much wine, so much love, and no Katie. As people and support started to thin, the reality of spending each day, much less my whole life, without her began to take on a horrible, lonely shape. And still, no Katie. Let me tell you something about Katie. She had a million best friends, and each of them knew it. She held her whole attention to the person in front of her. Play was the driving force in her life. She was deeply connected to her childlike state, so she was quick to laugh, saw adventure everywhere, and had boundless energy. I am the luckiest person to have had that gaze directed toward me for 37 years. We traveled the world together. We shared a bed in a studio in Brooklyn for a year. We shared a room overlooking a lake for a large part of our childhood. We crept into each other's beds right up until the very end to smooth hair, hold hands, and whisper secrets while nightmares passed. During the service and the months following, I heard a million variations of the phrase, 'I've never seen sisters as close as you were.' We had such a clear terminus that we'd imagined for ourselves. Drinking whiskey and sneaking cigarettes at 95 while her great-grandkids engaged in mischief around us, of course. The magnitude of her loss—the richness of our past, the vastness of our future, and the inability to hold her hand in the present—kept me on my knees for a very long time. For several moments, I was certain I was incapable of standing ever again. I am lucky to have a strong network in this magical valley that gently encouraged me and enabled me to spend time healing in Aspen. I will be awestruck with gratitude toward them for the rest of my life.



Sisters, Katie Nielsen and Brooke Page

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters of Pathfinders,

Every day, I wake up thankful that I get to live my passion through my work at Pathfinders. The opportunity to lead this incredible organization and create meaningful connections with clients has greatly enhanced my life. It is both a gift and an honor to do this work.

In this newsletter, you will read about our growing programs, new staff, incredible clients, and how we are enhancing our services to best meet the needs of the communities we serve. Thank you for your support of Pathfinders and for making this work possible. As you read these articles, know that you are integral to each story. Even if you cannot give money, the energy of your thoughts and love feeds us. We are grateful to YOU!

Over the past year, our School-Based Program, operating from Aspen to Parachute, has been the area of most growth and need. When school commenced in September, counseling requests were already up 700 percent from last year. Our program is unique, and we are fortunate we can meet the increased demand. Across the board, I am incredibly proud of the quality of all our programs and the compassion, integrity, and skill of the counselors who serve Pathfinders. We currently have 21 counselors, all of whom have private practices yet generously give back to the community through their work at Pathfinders. What an incredible gift!

There is so much happening in our world right now. There is an enormous amount of collective pain and grief, and Pathfinders wants to acknowledge it, name it, and let you know that we hold space for it. We are living in a time of division, racism, anger, violence, and destruction on many levels. Please know that we are with you.

May we hold each other close during this holiday season and turn towards the light, even amidst darkness.

*In Love,
Allison Daily*



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: LIFE AFTER LOSS, MY HEALING JOURNEY

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Pathfinders has been the biggest gateway to healing in the six months I've been here. Robyn has held a gentle yet firm space for me to experience and embody my grief fully. She has opened my heart to begin seeing resources around me in the simplest things, such as sunlight, seasons turning, and the density of Aspen's rootstock. Slowly, things I thought I'd lost forever came back to me, such as my sense of play, quick laugh, and yearning for adventure. Our work together has coaxed out places in me I'd thought were extinct. The progress that we've made has been astounding, not only to myself but to the people around me. Her work with the cyclical, endless relationship between resource, release, renewal, and return feels groundbreaking, even in my own ecosystem. After not working for several months, paying for therapy felt impossible. The resource of Robyn, through Pathfinders, has been the most surprising and welcome gift this valley has given me. She's allowed me to begin feeling Katie around and within me, and I will always be grateful for her and her work. She's also held space for me to take ownership of the work I have done for myself, none of which would have been possible without the generosity of Pathfinders.

—Brooke Page, Pathfinders Client

WELCOMING SCHOOL-BASED BILINGUAL COUNSELOR AMY SANTIZO

What brought you to work with Pathfinders, and how did you come to learn about the organization? I had the opportunity to meet Laura, the School-Based Program Coordinator, as I was doing my internship at one of the schools in New Castle. From there, I learned about Pathfinders and the amazing services they provide. I love how caring, supportive, and inclusive Pathfinders is with the community. I feel grateful to be part of such a wonderful, well-known, respected, and valued organization.

What is your professional counseling background? My professional background is in school counseling, and I am working towards becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). I have always loved working with school-age populations, and school counseling seemed like the best fit. With Pathfinders, I work with different age groups throughout various schools around the Roaring Fork Valley.



What would you say are your specialties or your primary approach to working with Pathfinders clients and in general?

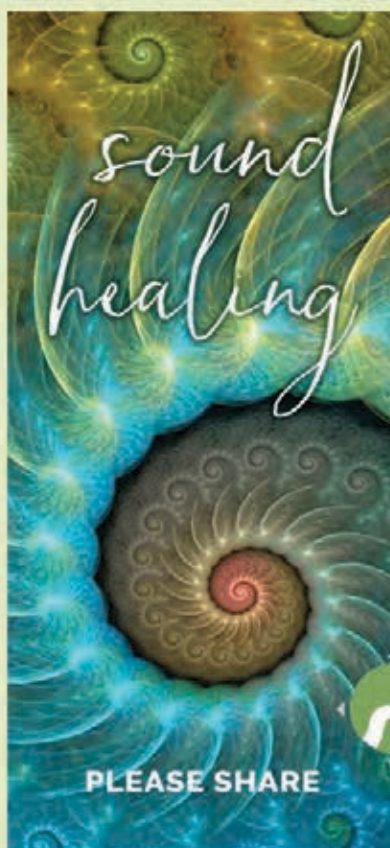
My ability to connect more deeply with students has provided them with a safe, inclusive, and nonjudgmental environment that has fostered the counseling sessions. Students want someone who will listen to them genuinely and provide validation and a sense that they are not alone and that someone else has been through a similar experience of grief and loss. The beauty comes from letting students know that they are not alone and disclosing with them when it is appropriate that one has gone through many of the situations they are going through regarding grief and loss. I provide more of a person-centered approach with my Pathfinders students, focusing on building the therapeutic relationship by providing genuineness, warmth, empathy, respect, congruence, and unconditional positive regard. I focus the sessions on the present moment and on experiencing and expressing their feelings so they can reach reconciliation by instilling hope.

Can you speak to the need for Spanish-speaking grief support in the schools? There is a tremendous need for Spanish-speaking grief support in schools across the valley and currently, most of my caseload is made up of Spanish-speaking students. I love that the parents, caregivers, school staff, students, and community value the need for grief and loss counseling services. For some newcomers, the whole idea of counseling and the role of a counselor is an unknown concept. I enjoy spending time with them and educating them on what counseling is all about and how it can support their psychological, physical, and social-emotional well-being.

How has working with Pathfinders made you grow as a therapist, and/or what do you appreciate most about working with this organization? I have learned so much from each one of the students that I have come across, and it has provided a sense of humility for me. Meeting students from different backgrounds has increased my cultural competence. I have always loved learning about other cultures, and through Pathfinders, I can do that and, at the same time, support students by being there for them when they need it the most. I like to apply a quote to my everyday life, and that is "Be the change you want to be in the world," and that is what I try to do—being there to listen to a student by conveying empathy, positive regard, and validation can encourage the therapeutic process to flourish. Working with Pathfinders has given me many enriching opportunities to grow and expand my skills to better support the students who can benefit from grief and loss counseling services.

COMMUNITY OFFERINGS

SOUND HEALING



FOR YOUR WELLBEING

Join us for the soothing, harmonizing and healing effect of singing bowls on your body and nervous system.

MONDAY • DEC 18th • JAN 15th | 5:30-6:30 PM

LED BY: Megan DiSabatino

WHERE: Aspen Chapel
77 Meadowood Drive

SIGN UP LINK: www.pathfindersforyou.org/news+events

DONATIONS TO PATHFINDERS APPRECIATED

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you never have to walk alone
www.pathfindersforyou.org

IMAGE BY: SPARX222.DEVIANT ART

CAREGIVER SUPPORT

A CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

Alzheimer's & Dementia

We are a support group for caregivers of loved ones with Alzheimer's, related dementias or mild cognitive impairment who share strategies for managing common concerns and reducing stress and burnout.

LED BY: Dr. Claire Rummel, a board certified geropsychologist with expertise in working with individuals with dementia and their families. She particularly enjoys working with family caregivers and has led support groups for many years.

WHERE: 10:30^{am}-12:00^{pm} | THE THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH

WHERE: BASALT REGIONAL LIBRARY | 14 MIDLAND AVENUE

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Rummel | 970.236.6394

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www.pathfindersforyou.org

PLEASE SHARE WITH OTHERS

YOGA

MOVE GENTLY TOWARDS BALANCE

Join us for a tranquil session of nourishing yoga, designed to ease the body and mind. Afterward, savor a cup of aromatic tea, allowing the calmness to linger as you connect with like-minded souls.

THURSDAYS | 7:30-8:30 PM

DEC 7th • JAN 11th • FEB 8th • MARCH 14th

WHERE: THE YOGA COLLECTIVE
1512 GRAND AVE. SUITE 213 | GLENWOOD SPRINGS

LED BY: Kate Andraschko

INFORMATION & SIGN UP (SPACE IS LIMITED):
Visit news + events at: pathfindersforyou.org

DONATIONS GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED

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CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF

During the Awareness Photography session with the grieving teenager, we had a surreal experience that left us in awe. As we strolled along the path in the woods, she shared with me her fondness for winter and her collection of penguins, even expressing her desire to dress up as one for Halloween. Little did we know that this seemingly casual conversation would soon take an extraordinary turn.

As we continued to walk deeper into the wilderness, our eyes fell upon something unimaginable—a penguin hanging on a tree branch. The sight immediately struck me as if defying all logic and reason. It felt like a message was being conveyed, as if the teenager's abuela, her departed grandmother, silently communicated with her from beyond.

At that moment, the sense of wonder and astonishment overwhelmed us both. It was as though the universe had conspired to show us the inexplicable connection between the teenager and her grandmother. This occurrence was more than just a mere coincidence.

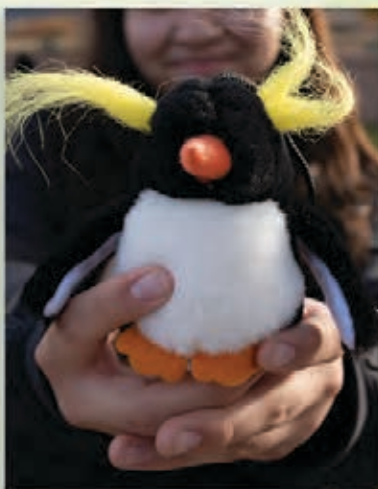
This encounter has left an indelible mark on me. It has strengthened my belief in the hidden depths of the human experience and the powerful forces that exist beyond our comprehension. It serves as a reminder that life's mysteries often reveal themselves in the most unexpected and extraordinary ways.

This experience also reminded me of the magic that can be found in nature. The fact that a penguin appeared in the middle of the woods, a creature so closely linked to winter and the teenager's affinity for it, speaks to the interconnectedness of our world. It was a small but meaningful sign, a gentle nudge from the universe, reminding us that there is beauty and wonder all around us if we open our eyes to see it.

Furthermore, this encounter highlighted the importance of listening and being present with those who are grieving. It allowed the teenager to feel a sense of comfort and connection with her grandmother, even in her absence. It served as a powerful reminder of the impact loved ones can continue to have on our lives, even after they are gone.

This encounter with the penguin hanging on a tree has left me in awe of life's intricacies and the interconnectedness of our experiences. It reinforced my belief in higher forces and the power of signs and symbols that can guide and comfort us in times of loss and grief. It was a truly serendipitous moment that will forever remain imprinted in my memory, soul, and heart!

—Cath Adams, Founder of Aperture of Hope LLC and Awareness Photography Outlets



THE GIFTS AND GRIEF OF CAREGIVING

Mother and daughter duo Kate and Deborah Hardaker are special clients who came to me for support as caregivers, each serving a unique role in the lives of their loved ones. Deborah was a support system for her sister, Caroline, and brother-in-law, Mike, as they navigated Mike's diagnosis and eventual death from Creutzfeldt Jakob disease. Kate still serves as a caregiver for her sister, Claire, who lives with Down Syndrome. For Deborah, watching Mike decline was one of the most challenging parts of supporting Mike and Caroline. Deborah shared that "he went from being so vibrant, fun, and alive to having very little control over his body" and that it was tough witnessing the emotional toll it took on her sister. Deborah often found that one of the most helpful things she could do each day was to spend time with Mike so that Caroline could get a break.



Kate and Deborah Hardaker

Her time with Mike allowed them to forge a special bond, and she felt it was one of the most important things she would ever do. Deborah looked forward to their time together, lying in bed watching his favorite shows with him. The deep connection she felt to Mike was unique and knowing that she could support her sister meant the world to her. Reflecting on the time she spent caregiving, she said she wants people to know "how hard and draining it is to provide this support, but that what comes from it is deeper connection and love to all involved. There is an unexpected feeling of fulfillment and purpose that you can witness everything with love and compassion."

Kate was also part of Mike's caretaking team, but for Kate, taking care of her younger sister, Claire, has been an even more significant role. When Kate was little, she only wanted a typical sister who could be her friend. Growing up, Claire was always defiant, requiring a lot of attention from those around her. Kate often felt pressure that people expected more of her, and she had to be the "good girl." She loved Claire, but it was hard not to have a normal sisterly relationship.

As difficult as it may have been and still can be, Kate recognizes the gifts of her relationship with her sister. Kate feels that Claire has taught her so much, providing her with a greater understanding of the people around her, how they think, and the importance of being inclusive of everyone. Kate attributes her enhanced communication skills to her sister as well. She has always had to speak carefully and intentionally with Claire, making her a better communicator with those around her and, when necessary, enabling her to redirect the behaviors of others. Kate says her relationship with her sister has also instilled a higher level of empathy, especially when she witnesses instances of exclusion.

For Deborah and Kate, counseling has been pivotal to their caregiving journey. Deborah acknowledges that our time together has provided her with a safe space to release her feelings and manage her emotions. She says it taught her to feel more comfortable in her role as a caregiver, and it prepared her with the necessary tools to navigate Mike's death. For Kate, counseling has enabled her to release others' expectations of her, speak her truth, and not feel pressured to ensure everyone else is doing okay "before doing things for herself."

—Allison Daily, Grief Counselor

PATHFINDERS PROGRAM UPDATES

SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM

Our school-based program was off to a very busy start this fall! Currently serving nearly 200 students and faculty from Aspen to Parachute, we offer individual and group sessions and school-wide grief support. Most of the grief and loss support we are addressing focuses on death, divorce, illness, newcomers, immigration, and family separation. Our program continues to expand rapidly each school year, and we are constantly seeking ways to provide schools throughout the valley with information on our growing counseling opportunities.

Our school-based counselors continue to do incredible work in our schools and communities. We have our fabulous intern, Erik Wardell, who recently represented Pathfinders at the Roaring Fork School District Community Partners session; Jennifer Glynn, who continues to support us in Garfield Re-2 at their community outreach at the start of each year; Robyn Hubbard, who provided a valuable presentation to the Aspen Hope Center School-Based Clinician Team on grief and loss; and Jarid Rollins, who recently led an excellent training for Pathfinders staff.

We were fortunate to add two new counselors to our program. Kate Andraschko is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who works for Mid-Valley Family Practice. She is also trained in trauma-informed yoga and has been generously leading these sessions through our complimentary Community Offerings program. We have also welcomed Amy Santizo, our new bilingual counselor. Amy's services are already in high demand throughout the valley. She currently works in 11 schools, focusing on Spanish-speaking students and families that recently relocated here from other countries. We have received significant feedback regarding the value of these counseling opportunities for students as they grieve for their home countries and the family members often left behind.

We continue to be grateful for the heartfelt feedback from school counselors and administrators throughout the valley for the work our truly unique counselors provided this past school year. We look forward to maintaining our successful programs and continuing to explore new ways we can best support our school communities.

—*Laura Irmen, Pathfinders Counselor and School-Based Program Coordinator*

CALAWAY YOUNG CANCER CENTER

In collaboration with the Calaway Young Cancer Center at Valley View Hospital, we continue to offer grief counseling for cancer patients and their families two days a week. We support patients during their chemotherapy infusions and on the inpatient floor of the hospital. We even offer phone support for those who travel long distances for treatment, or cannot make an extra trip to the center. Additionally, we facilitate a cancer support group at the center every Thursday. This group is open to anyone interested in the benefits of group support with others who also live with a cancer diagnosis, no matter their stage of diagnosis, treatment or survivorship.

—*Robyn Hubbard, Pathfinders Grief Counselor and Program Coordinator*



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