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## Young Fiancee find comfort and friendship at ellenor's Bereavement Group

When Jazz's fiancé died, she was left feeling "broken". But the support she found at our bereavement group has helped her through the pain of grief.

The 31-year-old project manager says: "The aftercare I have received from **ellenor** has been nothing short of incredible."

Jazz's fiancé Grant died of bowel cancer in October 2017 and in the November, she bravely attended her first meeting of the bereavement group

“Cuppa” on a Thursday evening at our Northfleet hospice.

She says: “I think I just needed it. I didn’t know what to do with myself or my grief and those meetings seemed like they would be the closest thing I could find to getting help from other people.

“The first time I went I was feeling terrified, worried I couldn’t control my emotions and overwhelmed by questions I might be asked. I felt protective of myself. I was worried about saying the wrong thing, but I had to see what it was about because I felt so alone.

“When I arrived, they immediately put my mind at ease and put me with two other ladies. Of course, at first people assumed I was grieving the loss of a parent or that I was one of the volunteers.

“The time of life you are bereaved doesn’t matter. I have built up some really close relationships through the group. They accepted me and my situation for what it was.

“I could say what I wanted to say, and how I felt. We don’t talk about our grief and the people we have lost all the time. Most of the time we just talk about everyday life, but we know there might be sensitive areas and dates and everyone gets it. We are all there for each other.”

The Covid restrictions stopped our bereavement groups from meeting last year, but we have recently reintroduced small, socially distanced sessions once a month on a Sunday. The plan is to extend these sessions again as restrictions are lifted.

In the meantime, Jazz and many of the other bereavement group members have stayed in contact via WhatsApp groups.

She says: “Everyone deals with grief in a different way. There are no preconceived ideas or misconceptions. I got very good at masking my feelings, but at the bereavement group you can talk about all of the things you can’t say to some people who haven’t experienced grief – and there is no judgement. There is a sense of security there.

“It has been good going back to the monthly meetings since the restrictions

have been slightly eased.”

Jazz has also benefitted from our counselling sessions.

She says: “I started the first lot of sessions nine months after Grant died. I was getting 2 hours a night sleep and just felt completely lost, I didn’t know what to do. I needed to grieve, and I didn’t want to mask that with doctors recommendations. I had preconceived ideas about counselling, and I must say I probably didn’t have a great opinion of it, but it was the best thing I ever did.

“When Grant was ill, there was never a doubt he wouldn’t be ok, he flew through treatment, went back to work and went back to rigorous exercise. He completed his chemotherapy and it was all good news and then 4 weeks later it was across his whole body. We never had any of those conversations about how long he had left. He was a true fighter and kept telling me he wasn’t going anywhere so who was I to judge and I fully supported him with that decision.

Sadly Grant soon deteriorated and Jazz became his sole carer. She says: “I have always been a very resilient person and to this day people say they don’t know how I did it, but I didn’t have a choice. I had to fight for Grant and I did what had to be done, but you do what you do for the person you love.

“His illness progressed so fast – no one expected it. From the time he was diagnosed to the end, so much happened and I think that’s why I suffered so much afterwards and it’s something I’m still working through to this day.”

Tragically Grant died just two days before the couple were due to have a church wedding. They were able to have a blessing instead, but Jazz never got the chance to wear her wedding dress.

She says: “It’s been a horrendous life experience and I am so glad I was beside his side. There are more good days now than bad, but Grant is always in my heart. I have the fondest memories and I was so lucky to have met him and I know I will probably always need help dealing with my grief.”

offering the best care and support to families facing terminal illness in Kent. We are the **only** charity in the county that provides hospice care for people of all ages – babies, children and adults - and their families. This includes pain and symptom relief, end of life care, respite, bereavement support and emotional and spiritual care.

Our Children's Hospice Care, formerly known as chYps, is provided in the comfort of the family home and spans across North and West Kent and the London Borough of Bexley. Adults living in Gravesham, Dartford and Swanley, receive care in their place of choice, including their own homes, at our Hospice in Gravesend and in local care homes.

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