

ASK THE DOCTORS

Dear Doctor: My father passed away six months ago, and ever since, my elderly mother has withdrawn from all social activity. I can't help wondering if this poses a problem for her mental health.

Dear Reader: The loss of a loved one is a heavy burden for anyone to bear. For an elderly person, particularly a surviving spouse, it can be even more difficult. Elderly women and men are already dealing with challenges such as declining health, loss of independence and the shrinking of their longtime social circles. When faced with the loss of their life partner, the overwhelming grief can cause them to retreat.



ASK THE DOCTORS

Dr. Eve Glazier and Elizabeth Ko

Your concern for your mother is well-founded. Research shows that social isolation poses a real threat not just to her cognitive function, but to her physical health as well. Elderly people who are socially withdrawn are at greater risk of long-term illness, high blood pressure, heart disease, dementia, losing their ability to walk and stay mobile, and of serious depression. Grief can suppress the immune system, making the elderly even more vulnerable. Studies reveal that elderly men and women who do not engage with other people die at a significantly higher rate than those who remain socially connected. This is a particularly troubling statistic as the number of senior citizens who live alone is on the rise. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to help:

- Research shows that grief counseling can help surviving spouses manage their sense of loss. Encourage your mother so see a counselor, or find a support group that she can join.

- Something as simple as making transportation easily available can help isolated seniors break free of their bubble.

- If your mother has connections to a church or other spiritual community, reviving those ties can be helpful at this time.

- Gathering family members at your mother's home for a meal or a movie can brighten her day. Make it a weekly or monthly habit if you can.

- For seniors who are strong enough, volunteer work, particularly with young people, gives them a meaningful activity that often has a positive effect.

- Encourage your mother to establish a new daily routine. A sense of stability can help life to feel normal again.

You may be so concerned about your mother's pain that you are shielding her from your own. Don't be afraid to let her see the sorrow you feel about your father's passing. Grieving together - sharing memories, telling stories, simply stating how you feel - can bring you closer and help her to feel ready to join the world again.

EVE GLAZIER, M.D., MBA, is an internist and assistant professor of medicine at UCLA Health. Elizabeth Ko, M.D., is an internist and primary care physician at UCLA Health.



Grove City College President Paul J. McNulty joins the Kennedy Catholic High School mascot for a photo opportunity with a cutout image of Pope Francis during the school's recent College and University Presidents Week program.

Kennedy Catholic hosts week of college presidents

HERMITAGE - Five presidents. Five days. Kennedy Catholic High School held its College and University Presidents Week at its middle and high schools.

Being the best version of yourself, developing an attitude of gratitude, saying 'yes' and 'thank you' more often to everyone and developing your inner grit, are only some of the points discussed by college presidents who visited the school the past week.

It began as a small scale idea, but, according to the school, it now has

a waiting list of colleges that would like to speak next year.

"We have had 15 presidents on our campus in the past three years, and we are extremely grateful to all of their fine institutions and their stories of leadership that they brought into the Kennedy Catholic doors," the school said in a release.

And the presidents who spoke at the event had positive things to say about it as well.

"Exposing students to individuals who lead institutions of higher learn-

ing is just incredible. I am blessed to be a part of the event and appreciative to Kennedy Catholic and Jeff Linn for inviting me. The idea and event itself needs thrusting and promoted at the national level, it was that special," said David Armstrong of Thomas More College in Crestview Hills, Ky.

The event also provided students with tools to use in their pursuit of higher education.

"It woke me up to what I need to think about with my college search process," said David Cianci, freshman.

6th Annual R/C racing event comes to Mercer County

STONEBORO - Big Dog R/C will host the 6th Annual "Showdown in the Snow" Indoor R/C (remote control) Car Racing event at 1 p.m. Dec. 17.

The track, located at 482 Stoneboro Lateral Road, Stoneboro, will be open earlier in the day. The event draws amateur and professional drivers from around the eastern United States and Canada who will drive their 1/10 scale cars at scale speeds of more than 400 miles per hour. Drivers will

showcase their talents in more than 12 different classes of R/C racing on both dirt oval and off-road racing tracks.

"Last year, the event had over 230 entries," said John Raskob, who owns Big Dog R/C with his wife, Robin. "We had drivers ranging from 5 to 75 years old, with both men and women competing," John said.

Big Dog R/C hosts Indoor R/C racing three times a week, year round. The Mercer County business features three

indoor tracks and two outdoor tracks, as well as a fully-licensed kitchen and large hobby shop.

Drivers will be competing for trophies, along with many prizes and giveaways. Big Dog R/C holds four large events each year, with the largest being at their Grand Opening with close to 2,000 spectators and participants. They broke the Guinness World Record for the Longest R/C Car Jump, and the certificate is on display at the store. Info: 724-376-2379.

KIDS IN THE NEWS

WM hosts Great Book Race competition

WEST MIDDLESEX - West Middlesex Area School District Tuesday hosted "The Great Book Race," a reading competition for area schools grades 7 thru 12.

Approximately 150 students from Greenville, Grove City, Hickory, Kennedy Catholic, Sharon, and West Middlesex participated.

The competition consists of a Middle School division and a High School division. The senior high students read from a list of 12 books such as: "I am Malala" by Malala Yousafzai, "Dead to Me" by Grove City native Mary McCoy, "The Wrath and the Dawn" by Renee Ahdieh and Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein."

The junior high students also read from a list of 12 books includ-

ing: "Zen and the Art of Faking It" by Jordan Sonnenblick, "Terrible Typhoid Mary: A True Story of the Deadliest Cook in America" by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, "The Crossover" by Kwame Alexander and Grove City native Mary McCoy's "Dead to Me."

The students competed in teams by answering questions about the books in three rounds of 36 questions each, quiz bowl style. Top three winners in each division were recognized in an awards ceremony. The results of this year's competition are:

Middle School Division
First Place - Meme Team Dream Teme from Greenville Jr./Sr. High. Team members were: Camryn Warner, Marley Chapman, Alaina Gregory, Brady Kincaid, Jacki Hittle, Amber Pearce, James Stevenson, Ella Hildebrand, Kylee Lorenzo, Toby Williams, Ashley Bly, and Madison Nagel.
Second Place - Spicy

Savages from Greenville Jr./Sr. High

Third Place - Tiger Tales from Sharon Middle-Senior High

High School Division
First Place - Frankenners from Grove City Senior High School. Team members included: Alexa Highland, Kaycee Shumaker, Rebecca Aloisio, Elaine O'Rourke, Bethany Hawke, Devina Mathieson, Ruiting Feng, Alyssa Clouse, CC O'Rourke, and Lauren Holmes.

Second Place - Disorganization from Kennedy Catholic High School

Third Place - Reading Raptors from Grove City Senior High School

The Great Book Race was coordinated by Geraldine Truog and Tiffany Riddle with the assistance of Casey Palko and the WMHS National Honor Society. Special thanks to West Middlesex Area School Board, Dr. David Foley and the administration for their support of this event.

Approaching a family after suicide

Dear Annie: I read your articles in my local paper. I know it's hard to always find the right answer for someone, as some may agree with you and some may disagree. It is now that I come to you for some words of wisdom. I hope someone else out there like me will read this and help gather some advice to send our way, too.

We had a close friend kill himself recently. It was devastating to everyone, especially for his family. I still find myself trying to find the right words to say to the family members. When I see them, I really don't want to ask, "How are you doing?" I know that opens the wounds every time they hear that, and I know it's killing them, too. But I also know they would consider me insensitive if I were not to say anything about things at all. What is something proper to say or ask? You're never prepared for this, and there is no simple etiquette regarding this delicate subject.

DEAR ANNIE

Annie Lane



- Sudden Loss for Words in TN
Dear Sudden: I'm so sorry for your loss. You're right; there is no simple etiquette in the face of pain that is so profound and personal. Don't worry yourself about finding the right words to say. Your feelings will surpass your phrasing. Extend your warmth to the family members the next time you see them by letting them know you're thinking of them, even if they need some space for the time being. Tell them, in your own words, that you will always be there for them in whatever capacity they need. What matters is that you are a loving presence in their lives.

Dear Annie: I'd like to offer a different position than the letters I've seen addressing "Frustrated in Maine's" dislike of being asked by a restaurant's waitstaff whether he would like change.

I think that this is an argument of semantics and part of the generational divide, much like the inherent dislike of the phrase "no problem" (which is a whole different can of worms).

After speaking with a few other young people, I've found a pattern: Many millennials prefer to work with whole numbers when paying for meals. So rather than calculate a 15 percent tip exactly, they'll approximate it and round to the nearest dollar (or to the nearest bill they have available). As long as the difference isn't too great, they're content to perhaps give closer to a 20-25 percent tip to a good waiter if that means they won't have to deal with small change.

Hence, waitstaff has come into the habit of asking, "Would you like your change?" It's less fishing for a tip and more asking, "Have you included my tip in the money you gave me, or do you want me to bring back the change?" In such a busy environment as a restaurant, I don't blame servers for trying to save an extra trip back to the table. When the difference is very large (for example, when someone uses a \$50 bill on a \$20 tab), they usually won't even ask and will simply bring the change.

I doubt any of these servers are intending to be rude, and I'm completely astounded that people would withhold tip money (which makes up the majority of wait-staff's pay) over something so petty - especially if someone was an otherwise wonderful server. - Flabbergasted in North Dakota

SEND your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

Creators Syndicate

ON CAMPUS

■ **Stephanie Garrett,** West Middlesex, a family and consumer science education major at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, has been selected for the 2016 M. Jane Segar Longenecker Scholarship.

Stephanie, a daughter of Troy and Brenda Garrett, West Middlesex, is a 2013 graduate of West Middlesex Junior-Senior High School.

She is a member of the Family and Consumer

Sciences Education Student Association, was selected for membership in Kappa Delta Pi honor society, volunteers with Crusade for Christ and has a work-study position at the Jimmy Stewart Museum in Indiana. She is a 2015 recipient of the Susan E. Finley Scholarship and a 2015 recipient of the Longenecker Scholarship.

Students with strong academics, financial need and who demonstrate a commitment to community service are eligible for these scholarships.

VALLEY VOICES

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