

# a-child-s-legacy-healing-grief-with-hope-jennifer-with-chris...

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people, cornerstone, grief, grieving, years, loss, pain, hope, grateful, life, lost, son, mark, awe, blessed, community, bobby, groups, support, treehouse

## SPEAKERS

Christi Tripodi, Jennifer Malcolm



Jennifer Malcolm 00:10

Welcome to the Jennasis Speaks podcast The Transformative Power of Women's Stories, a platform that empowers women storytelling to promote collective vulnerability, acceptance and healing. I am your host, Jennifer Malcolm, self made entrepreneur, women advocate and life balance expert. Welcome back to the next episode of Jennasis Speaks podcast The Transformative Power of Women's Stories where every woman has a story and every story matters. And that means you. I'm Jennifer Malcolm, your host, founder and president of Jennasis, and Associates, and women's voice advocate on Jennasis Speaks. With me today is Dr. Hart Christi Tripodi from cornerstone of hope I've known mark and Christie and cornerstone for about six years. I think Christy and I, though, only officially met about two years ago, and just incident spirits and instant connection. And when you have that hurt, warmth and connection and the beauty of just transparency and friendship that was there automatically with Christie. So welcome, Christy.



Christi Tripodi 01:17

Thank you.



Jennifer Malcolm 01:19

You're very welcome. I'm gonna start with your little bio here and then we're just gonna jump right into your story.



Christi Tripodi 01:24

Okay, Alrighty, so,



Jennifer Malcolm 01:27

after losing their three year old son, Bobby to an unexpected and fatal illness, Christi Tripodi and her husband Mark founded cornerstone of hope, a nonprofit organization that provides a wide range of grief support services. Christy and Marc's personal journey led them through healing from their own grief, to helping others to heal. their commitment is a tribute to the little boy that they lost. Chrissy joins me today to share her personal experience with grief, how that experience drove the decision to launch Cornerstone, and what she has learned from the lasting impact unresolved grief can have in people's lives. So welcome, and I am honored, I know that you have been a busy bee this last four to six weeks. And I am really blessed that you took the time to be here with us today.



Christi Tripodi 02:17

You're so sweet, gentle and honored that you would ask me really, I was telling you earlier that God always wants to keep me humble, so humbling to do. But I appreciate that you feel like I hope that my story will, you know, help others at a time when, you know, as we're coming up on the holidays, it is a really hard time, this has been a heck of a year, and those that are grieving are definitely more isolated and alone, they have never been in a year of COVID it's truly, truly tough, really, truly difficult times, let alone going through the pain of loss and love. It's also really isolating to have to separate yourself when people couldn't, you know, walk you through the journey a little bit more. Yeah,



Jennifer Malcolm 03:06

and they and they feel like through because I've had numerous friends that have lost parents, through this spouses and not just necessarily from COVID but shows through life and unexpected death or unexpected heart attacks, some through COVID. But even that ability or inability to properly process the, you know, funeral, a public, you know, gathering the gathering of family where things are isolated, and or where funerals you know, have been put on hold for months. And I'm sure that you guys have had impact or people reaching out. So can you share with the audience a little bit about that piece of just

grieving through COVID?



Christi Tripodi 03:48

Yeah, I mean, it's definitely it does not allow the grief process to happen for those individuals. Part of Yeah, that closure that you need, so desperately, being able to do a proper burial having your loved ones come through and, and you know, feeling the support and love the love of your family and friends and to not have that fully is truly it's a disruption in an even greater way. For those that grieve. I can't even imagine what people are going through this year. I honestly can't even imagine. Because it means everything. So, so silly and strange. But you remember the people that don't show up? And you really remember the people that do and when they can't, I can't I can't I really my heart just breaks for people that are going through this right now. Well, it just magnifies that isolation does and magnifies it in a huge way.



Jennifer Malcolm 04:46

Yeah, that ability to just connect, break bread together, have a meal, you know, be at the services together and have some closure in that regard. And that, you know, we've been on a lot of people have been Unable to experience that in 2020.



Christi Tripodi 05:03

It's definitely a very difficult year in so many levels. But yeah, the grief process is truly, truly being just very tested in a way that nobody could possibly have ever saw.



Jennifer Malcolm 05:20

So take a moment and tell the audience about your beautiful family because you and Mark, when you we see you out a in public you guys do? Yeah, no, I probably did more modified this year with COVID. But you guys do fundraisers, you're out in the community, your children are there with you. So just tell the audience a little bit about the blessing of the the children that you have in your life, because I know you have several and there's a age span between them.



Christi Tripodi 05:46

You're so sweet. We do we have eight children on earth now, which I honestly can say we would have never had weren't through the death and loss of our son. But I think when you go through something like that, just everything changes, you can draw those plans that

you had out the door, because your life is forever changed. And so yeah, our kids are very involved, unfortunately, they have to be, you know, to run this organization is very difficult. And, you know, I've had two kids homeschooling this year, due to COVID nap, because I was afraid to send, I still have several that are in school, but my two youngest are home just because they didn't want to wear a mask all day and be in school. And so we've had weekly service projects at cornerstone. That's what we've done and chairs and tables, and, you know, carrying garbage out and all that kind of things. So my kids have grown up, you know, as Cornerstone being a part of our life and, and yet, they know the purpose behind it. And, you know, it's it's kind of it's really a good way for us to teach service to our kids. In a lot of work. It's a lot of work, and family will say that.

**J** Jennifer Malcolm 07:01  
So all hands on deck. They're

**C** Christi Tripodi 07:03  
all hands on deck, no doubt about it, no doubt about it.

**J** Jennifer Malcolm 07:07  
So you mentioned the loss of Your Beloved Bobby. And I think that was back in 2000 2000. Can you just share with the audience what you are comfortable with, you know, the beauty of who he was his age and how things transpired?

**C** Christi Tripodi 07:23  
Sure. We had all kind of it was Mother's Day weekend, we had all kind of had a touch of sort of flu that week. And I remember having a headache and just not feeling myself I had another daughter that just kind of wasn't feeling good, kind of threw up a couple times got better. And then on that Saturday before Mother's Day, he said he wasn't feeling good. And I just thought it was like what we all had. And we that evening, I remember, I put him to bed for a nap because I really wanted him to sleep hoping that you know the sleeping has healing. So I could tell he was just just more So looking back, I could tell he was more lethargic. And I called in and I asked her pediatrician what to do. And he said, you know, bring him down. I said he just seems a little more lethargic. You remember from our other kids that day. And so we brought them down to the ER, and they weren't rushing, they had kind of mentioned that, you know, if he you know, we'd like to do a spinal tap and I hear the word spinal tap. And immediately I was like, gosh, that's the last thing I want to do. You know, it's probably a flu or something. And I've heard a lot of negative about that. So

I wanted him to I said, you know, what else, you know, they said, well, we'll treat him as if he wants to have it, we'll treat him with everything else. And, and, and like two hours went by. And then around the third hour, they said, you know, we're gonna send them up to the to the ICU just for evaluation. They'll probably go home tomorrow, we just want to make sure that everything's okay. They didn't rush to get us up there. So like an hour later, they brought us up stairs, and they said, give us five minutes to get him hooked up and come and get you guys back into the room with him. So I kissed him and I said, we'll be right in their body. And we went out into the waiting room when they said five minutes. Well, 15 minutes goes by, and I would call it in and I just said I'm sorry, but you said five minutes. Our son is in there. They said we're going to send a doctor out. I said, Okay, so another 15 minutes goes by, I call back in. I'm like I'm sorry. But now you've said five minutes and it's been longer than that. You've said twice I called. They said no problem. I promise somebody come right out. Well, another 1015 minutes goes by. And I finally said mark, I'm done. Just go find yourself. Yeah, Mark ran into the room. And literally came out in a few minutes and said that they had said to him, sir, I'm sorry, you have to go back out into the room. Your son is not the child that we thought they were sending out from the ER, we had to intubate him. He was having strokes of the brain. And we will be out as soon as we possibly can. So yeah, it, it was extremely, you know, I think we were five years into our marriage. You know, he's three years old. And I would say that night, about 40 to 50 people came into the hospital, and we're praying, I remember people praying with us. And I just remember laying there and sobbing. At that point, they had come out and said that we we think that your son has meningitis. We're not sure yet. What kind of added a few hours later they came out and said, he definitely has spinal meningitis. And we're not, not sure he's going to make it again, and that next morning, we walked out of the hospital without our son. Yeah, and we had to No, no, you know, go home to a house with still two daughters. And I think I just immediately held them and then crawled in bed was never the same.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 11:37

forever changed how I'm sorry. You. And it's interesting, because I know, it's been 20 years. And the I in the studio, you know, tears coming down my face. And just hearing the rawness and your voice like it's still, how tender, how tender, flawless.

C

Christi Tripodi 12:01

It is. And, you know, I think what is so interesting is, you know, I think people think you just, you just heal from grief, but I would never say that you're healed. Um, I just got back from a trip. And there was a song that I remember, it just came out. And it was a Tarzan song, because then it was his favorites. And it was the one about you'll be in my heart. You

know, always and, and it was almost like, we used to sing that with each other. And honestly, 20 years later, we're all sitting in this band. And I swear to you, my husband and I were saving just last week, and we turned around and our kids were saving now most of our kids haven't even met him. Right? tell you that he is every day. I mean, every day this kid is talked about every day this kid is it's just changed our whole family. He just he just, you know, I don't I don't know that you ever get over it. I think you just learn to live through it, you know, and you learn to, for us, it was a great, you know, a great Crossroads for us in our faith. I would say we weren't going through the motions. And I don't think you can ever say the same. After the death of a loved one, you know, you're either going to go from God or you're going to go grow closer to him. Because I know that I was asking all those questions after my son died like, and by the way, I was angry. I got I want you to know that. Like I remember journaling to him. Like How could you do this? You knew my kids were everything. I probably love my kids more than my husband at the time. I I'm sure I love my kids more you know than anyone really, I were a part of everything in who I was. And I just wanted to be the best man. So for me to lose a child It was like, like you said just forever changed. And and I needed to answer ask those questions like what is this life about? What am I doing? Where's my son? How am I going to see him again? I just think sometimes when you you go through suffering, it's the only time you're gonna ask those questions because other than that I didn't. I didn't ask those questions. I think I was sad a lot about losing my parents one day, but I could tell you this I never ever really that I wanted to go to heaven. I never like thought about leaving this life. I was all about the here and now. Living for today and what next week and tomorrow was last word.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 14:52

And it sounds like you know through. You said that Bobby's with you every day. Yeah, children every day and It's a legacy, he's leaving his fingerprints all over the world. And again, as a mom, you'd be like, I'd rather have my son. This legacy, I'd rather go. back. I know, I'm sure you and Mark are very proud of the work that you do and the hard work and, and how your family all, you know, jumps in sure what is a piece I'm sure like, you know, screw the business you tickle. And exchange this

C

Christi Tripodi 15:30

I can say that I can say, This is not like sometimes I'm like, God, why this isn't like a piece of cake. Say was are all glory, but it's you know, I mean, just running a business. It's It's not easy, you know, are often just at the hands of God. And we always say, you know, he, I think again, it was the first time we were put on our knees and we haven't gotten up since. And I can say that in our our life has changed. We are daily praying because it is not easy. And the stories that come through this place. I you know, I think our story so bad, and it's

still so painful. But the stories that are coming through are unbelievable. And they honestly give me hope, as you know, so many that I needed, I needed hope when I lost him, I needed to find a better couple and other family had been through the loss of a child like I needed that desperately. And I think that's what people are mostly looking for. When they come there, they need hope, you know, I, I needed hope. And I needed that. So concretely, like, I just I wanted to know that this is doable, like I'm gonna survive this and, and sometimes I don't think people don't think they're going to survive, they really don't know that's good.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 16:53

as you guys have done this through hope, the Jennasis Speaks movement is doing it through kindness and unconditional love that you're not alone in your pain in your shame in your mistakes in your trauma in some future chose to do and maybe made a poor, poor choice or something that happened to you that our past don't determine our future. And it doesn't, it doesn't make it a race and like you're the magic ones, you know, through your brain and you forget all of that past trauma or pain. But it is that piece of hope and joy and kindness and unconditional love that joining in a community you're stronger versus being alone and isolated. And, and having that fight alone versus in a community of people. And that's what you and Mark created.

C

Christi Tripodi 17:41

We always say you don't come to Cornerstone because there's something wrong with you calm because there's so something so right with you. To the extent that you love is the extent that you agreed and, and have a lot of lovers at Cornerstone because these people are amazing, and they're hurting, so desperately. And I just really believe that we're meeting them where they're at. And it doesn't mean you come there because you're so faithful. And yet you're you know, you're crying inside me we have people that don't believe in God. And because I'm all about like, I just want you to see that somebody is there to meet you where you're at. And in your sadness, we want to journey with you. It's not easy and know how it feels. And again, I never understood how bad the holidays were. I mean, I wouldn't understand so much of my life if I hadn't gone through this experience. You know, who didn't ever I was going about the holiday singing my Christmas joy songs and all that goodness, and it's so good. But, you know, I would have never thought that the person behind the cash register, I never could have thought about them. Like I wouldn't, I wasn't thinking like somebody could actually be having a really hard time this time of year. You know, you go to Thanksgiving, you have an empty seat at your table, you go to go through Christmas, I I just now know how hard these times are. And I feel so grateful to do what we do because we know how

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Jennifer Malcolm 19:11

that's a it's a humble leadership and servanthood that you guys, you know, you're seeing through Northeast Ohio and Columbus and beyond all you know, across Ohio and, and it's one of those things that you know, my sister and I always laugh we're like, these are the things you know, the lessons you learn, like you'd rather not go through the pain, but the gold and the treasure, the perspective, the change spirit that change DNA that you could never have had you not walk through that. And I know that through my personal experience and and my divorce 11 years ago and some of the pain that I went through and loss that I the depth of compassion that was birthed after my divorce was insurmountable and you know like the judgmental Beforehand of, or lack of vision, or lack of understanding beforehand, and then realizing, you know, through what the loss, the compassion that can be birthed through that as well.

C

Christi Tripodi 20:13

And that's so beautiful. And I'm so grateful you're doing this program, because I think we all need. We all need, you know, heroes of this day to help us on the journey, you know that. In a world I feel that, you know, tries to push and numb the pain. That's not, it's not going to help you numbing your pain, with alcohol, drugs, with all those things that we know are so readily available for us to numb the pain. It's not, that's not going to help us in the end. It doesn't, and having people like you to talk about what you've been through, and through that, you're going to help somebody else. So you know, I do like, again, I'm always humbled. And I appreciate that, you know, you allow me to tell my story. And I hate telling my story, but I'm, I'm grateful, I hope it helps someone to know that they're not alone. And to know that, you know, that I always tell people that are going through the grief process, like you're the real heroes today. Like I really mean that because to go through the loss of someone you love so much, and to still be able to get up and get out of bed and still have that compassionate heart. That's amazing. Like, it's, it's not easy to do, it's not actually even easy to be nice, you know, it's, you're so consumed with yourself and, and your suffering. And to actually be able to have this great sense of compassion is so incredible, but that comes later. Like, I also want to say that like one of the greatest pieces of advice ever heard from our infectious disease doctor was like, grieved for a year, you know, the Jewish faith gives you a year to not go to anything, and that he a part of a party of graduation, which by the way, it took me two years, I couldn't go to any family. My brother's graduation, a wedding, I just, I just didn't want to bring people into my misery, I was miserable. And, um, and I also think that people feel this thing, like, if I don't have that pain, then I'm not so connected to my loved one. And they, and they don't want people to see them smile, because then the people think that we're doing better, right, we're all good. And we should be back to normal in a month or two, you're lucky if you get that long. And that's just not reality, my mother in law tells me all the time, like, she finally



started to see sparks in us around 10 years. That's a long time to grieve, you know, and we did. And again, I, I would say, you know, I can go to that theme, any day, any moment, any song, any trigger, and I think people can go through, go to that, it's like, it's like a wave, it's like, it hits you all of a sudden with a memory or a song or something that they loved. And you're back at it and his co hosts like it did when you were, you know, a few days out. I mean, it's bad. So I mean, you know, I'm just, you know, I just don't think that we, we don't give permission to allow people to agree, or own. And that's a really, I think that's even more so a part of Cornerstone is just the awareness that it's real, like, really is real, it's, it's debilitating for so long. And and the beautiful part that I love about Cornerstone though is I see the faces of people that walk in on day one of a support group, and they can't even talk like, honestly, they sit in their car, sometimes we've had people tell a story that they stories that they sit in their cars, because they can't believe they actually are at a place to have to walk through. You know, so, um, to what it looks like at week 10, where they're talking and laughing because people there understand that, that talking and laughing doesn't mean I'm better. And I'm functioning and you understand my pain you're going through to so you know what I'm saying? When I'm laughing? I'm still really hurting, able to laugh with you because you make me feel safe, because I know you're hurting too. So that's what I love. And I appreciate so much about what the work that's being done now,

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Jennifer Malcolm 24:28

you know, and that's powerful, because I feel like what your message is and the foundation of, you know, your whole ministry and your nonprofit is to give permission at no matter what stage of life, no matter what stage in, you know, it's been two months, it's been 20 years, it's been 40 years. But that song that smell that memory that comes back and it just does take you right back and that's normal and it's okay and it's healthy, where most people are like you know, get you know Get over it. Like, come on, let's move on. Let's move on, it's been a long time and to create a culture to say, No, that's really human. That's how we're wired. And it's a part of that. And in Western culture, you know, you're lucky if you get a week off of work or anything to process and you're back to the grind. And, and, and to allow the community and to have a community where, hey, I may be laughing, or I may have a smile on my face, but I'm not really okay. And everyone really understands that. That's that that's the pattern there. And that's okay. And it's welcome.

C

Christi Tripodi 25:35

Yeah, absolutely. I'm thinking of a woman that I saw there that I did was in our town, and she showed up at one of our candlelight memorials, and was like, went up to her, and I just sat by her, and I'm so sorry, like, I, I don't I'm not sure who lost it. I'm so sorry. I didn't know

that you were coming. And she said, I actually lost my baby 30 years ago, and I've never, ever had the chance to really mourn her. And I was like, Yeah, like, Thank you, God, you're giving us, you know, giving a woman the permission to mourn her babies 30 years later than when she didn't get a chance to do it. And I, you know, I never really got into that, but it was just like, ah, like, that's so good. Like, you allow something so, so incredible, that I would have never thought, you know, that somebody could do that, and come there for that purpose. So, I mean, there's so many stories, and, you know, so many incredible things that have happened. And I just, I am, I'm in awe, like, I'm in awe of what he's done through this place. And I always say, it's not us, it is so him. Because, listen, we were not, you know, in 2000, our son died. So, you know, by 2000. I want to say like, 2003, we started doing support groups. And, you know, and I just, it's just, I don't know, it's really just powerful to think, you know, what, what God has done by putting people together and like, kind of like being a puppeteer and controlling all these things, and bringing incredible people to us. And, you know, helping us to do this. And again, it's a team, it's, as I know, you know, what you do? It is a team it is, it takes a village. And it's so true, because it's not just our story. And I say that this place is never just about our story. Because the stories of everyone that has come through this place, it just, I'm an I'm in constant state of awe of the stories that come there. And the people that are so incredibly strong and the compassion for what what happens there and the hope that they leave with and that's, that's all I care about, listen, I want them to have open. And because otherwise, we're just putting a bandaid on, you know, we're not, you know, I don't I don't want to put a bandaid on it. I want you to learn to walk with this grief. To never like, you know, there's a really incredible statistic 80% of those incarcerated have an unresolved grief conflict. As we talked earlier, if you don't deal with your grief, you're going to go for something else to fill those holes are going to go to the numbness of whatever that is. You want to numb your pain with and I just, yeah, I just I feel so blessed. This place is there. And I always say it is there. It is exactly what I would have wanted so desperately when we lost our son.



### Jennifer Malcolm 28:30

One and with that statistic, too. I mean it if that's the incarcerated, and you know, the the number of people that you guys, you know, held at Cornerstone and The Inbetweeners that, you know, we've had lost but maybe not fully grieved it. You know, there's a whole society of walking wounded people walking emotionally wounded people, that we hope that we cope, we work, we work out, we overeat, we numb through TV, alcohol, drugs, backs, whatever that is, yeah, to now lessen the pain, and that it comes out sideways, somehow, whether it comes out in an argument with a loved one spouse, if it comes out in self harm, if it comes out in a way that ends up in incarceration. So we are a society of walking wounded, because we've not properly grieved through a woman of 30 years of losing her baby to, you know, someone that might be in their 50s losing a parent, and that

whole you know, gamut of loss. And we you know, kind of in society give them a weekend and like Alright, let's let's move on and you know, back to back to life and back normal and that does not properly serve the way we're wired emotionally. was there no support group or like, counseling around when Bobby loss and that is that why, you know, the kind of the birthing and finding community of other people around you and how Cornerstone started.



Christi Tripodi 29:56

So, you know, we had more Once a month support groups that we found in the basement of a hospice, that was not professionally led all of our all of our support groups, our master level clinicians that lead these groups. So it's really important because I feel like it's such a vulnerable group, you can't just have any. Again, counseling for us was \$120 an hour. That's, I mean, we couldn't afford that my son's helped us. We needed that we went once a week for 10 weeks, we were desperate. It's so expensive. And what do you do the 28 or 29 other days during the month when you're so I mean, our daughter was picked up from a bus, you know, 40 feet in front of our house, we couldn't even get her to school, we couldn't get her on the bus. And time 20 some days that year of bringing her into school, my husband and his pajamas saying I'm sorry, I just, we couldn't get out of bed, you know, like you didn't, you didn't want to get out of bed. So, you know, I think they brought her into the guidance office one time for 15 minutes, send us home with a book that was 25 years old, it's just people don't know how to deal with, they know how to help someone in their grief process. This wasn't my daughter's best friend. You know, she had a lot of struggles. And even today, she tells us the ways that, you know, we maybe didn't help her and her grief. And, and so you know, you there's just so many and what I love about Cornerstone is that we don't just serve the person we serve, you know, that entire family. So we have groups for kids, and we have groups for adults and, and, you know, we have art therapy and interventions for you know, each one, you know, whatever your your family is going through whether it be a family counseling session. Um, so, you know, I just again, I feel so blessed and grateful to have such incredible people down there that are really helping us to lead this organization and really think of new ways to help. It's definitely been interesting with COVID, we've, you know, had to, we're blessed to really work through telehealth, telehealth. But it's also incredible to know that even though this is happening, how many people still want to come in we have been since May we have been open back into the counseling one and fun because people want to be sitting with someone in person, it's amazing the importance of relational ministry, we still have to keep that going, you know, and, and they're socially distance. And we do a really good job of making sure that that's all done and done properly. But it really says a lot about the human spirit we need, we need people we need.



Jennifer Malcolm 32:38

Well, and it's interesting because my husband, Chad and I, we did a counseling session for something right before COVID might have been right at the end of March. And then our next one was zoom. And it was a night and day experience and the one that's in the office, that just creates an atmosphere of safety, of focus. So you're not distracted by the things in your house or your home or your dogs or you know what's going on. And just the vast difference. And it was interesting, because we did the one zoom and we're like, I think like what we needed to discuss, we're good, but it was just a night and day experience and, and how much more valuable and how, how, you know, facilitating that human connection is vital because there's a layer of healing and there's a layer of comfort, there's a layer of unveiling or getting, you know, getting into a position of vulnerability more quickly, potentially, just having someone close and holding a cup of coffee and, you know, just having that human interaction. So I applaud you guys for facilitating that, that need for human connection as well. So you guys have a special building on your property, the tree house. Can you tell the audience because I've been in it a few times, and it's such a fabulous piece? One your property's absolutely gorgeous your facilities are absolutely beautiful. But there's a real special place on your property the treehouse Can you share with the audience what that is?



Christi Tripodi 34:05

Oh, gosh, I want to say well, good many years ago we were on the show the treehouse masters Mark wanted to build a tree house just for a more secluded face for for more one on one and maybe more for like the young adults because they need like, you know, it's hard enough to want to come there. But then to come there and maybe have a special sacred kind of place that you can go. So the show tree house masters you know, we were blessed to have a donor you know, help us out with that process. He sponsored us and sponsored actually a woman who actually died she was my age Believe it or not 52 years old, left eight children. And he wanted to do something in honor of her and so this treehouse is a butterfly treehouse. It's really beautiful. It's all butterflies and it's secluded back into the woods of our on our property. And it's just, you just feel like you're in another place when you stand back there in the midst of the trees. And, and, you know, it just, again allows another sacred space for people to go and have one on one counseling and for small group therapies that we do. But yeah, it is, it's people love to walk down there, they love to be back there. And, again, you're there, they're looking for peace, you know, they're, we're all looking for peace. And, and I think, gosh, now more than ever, but, you know, it's just it kind of gives that availability to us. Whereas, you know, the, the bigger main center is up at the top of the hill, and, you know, people



Jennifer Malcolm 35:46

it's been a busy so this is a really nice secluded area, we're blessed. And it's beautiful, because like Christie said, If you come into the main parking lot, you go into the gorgeous main facility, but there's a lot of interaction, you know, people coming in or out, or people just in the facility, whether it's employees or people, you know, getting counseling, but it's just, it's almost like this, like walk with nature guide, you know, down to the tree house. And then this is this quiet respite of beauty and healing and, and it's just a gorgeous place. So, once, And I remember, I remember listening to mark, speak somewhere, and hearing a little bit about the story of Bobby and your loss. And, you know, and he just said that, the, the mantle, or the call that he felt was hearing a voice from God, just saying, Don't waste this pain, and don't waste this pain, don't waste this pain. And, and, you know, we always say, you know, we, you know, through me, like, my story, my motto has been, you know, beauty will come from ashes. And, and there's a scripture verse that, that, you know, is about that, and that, you know, God takes the weak to astound the wise. And there's all sorts of things that even through this podcast, sharing that, you know, our some of our greatest failures, or some of our greatest losses, become a vocal piece and trumpet of power and authority, because we have first hand experience that, and I am in awe when Mark said this, and it was actually in a, you know, secular business setting and just sharing the story of corner set of hope and just an awe of the story of, yes, I'm grieving, but we're going to do, we're going to make light out of darkness, we're going to, we're going to create hope, out of pain, and create a community where people really come together and most powerful,



Christi Tripodi 37:49

we always say pain to purpose or tragedy to triumph. You know, that God works through, you know, our messes. And I think again, like, it's, it's that whole, you know, when we are weak, he is so strong. And I truly think that we both learned that in this whole process. You know, it's truly that that's when God got ahold of her heart, you know, our son, you know, I, I didn't just stop loving our son when he died at three years old. I mean, if anything today, 20 years later, I honestly can say, I love him more. I am who I am because of him. And he brought me to know the Lord and in a way I never would have. And so I think like, when I hold him again, like out, I'll be So, just so thankful that he changed the course of our family life. Change. And, yes, he brought Cornerstone, but he also just changed our life as a family, like, you know, all those silly things that we once thought about, or all those things that were so important back then they're not important anymore. What's important is what you do for others, the difference that you make in people's lives and, and just also staying humble in who you are. Because, you know, we all need each other, we're all going to go through suffering, we're all broken. We all go through something, everybody has a story, and I love what you're doing. Because it's it is and we need to hear each other's

stories, because, you know, it makes us feel like we're not alone. And that, you know, we can get through this together and meet each other, you know, and, and so I love it. And I'm, I'm so grateful to that we met you and and you know, and I just I just feel really blessed. Again, he never he never surprises me that he puts incredible people in our past. So I appreciate

J

Jennifer Malcolm 39:43

Oh, you're so welcome. So So what was Bobby's personality? Like? Was he shy and quiet? Was he rambunctious with me? Was he you know, an introvert extrovert?

C

Christi Tripodi 39:52

You're so sweet. He was you know, he was a typical three year old in so many ways you love trucks. And I think I said he loves Tarzan and, and all those good things. He loves Blue's Clues and but the thing that he did, I think that was one of the most powerful things for me was every time I would leave to go out the door, and those very rare occasions that I would leave and not give him a kiss, but always say, Mommy, Mommy, wait, I have to give you a kiss up to me and run in my arms and hug me and kiss me and Oh, I love it. Like, I forever treasure that ever treasure, the gift that he gave me. In fact, my husband put it in three pictures of him hugging and kissing me and then, you know, wrote that at the bottom, like, no wait Mommy, I have to give you a kiss. And so it's amazing. Like, I feel so blessed to love as much as I love and I know, I'm getting so sappy. And I didn't want to do this today. But, um, it's, it's, I also think this year has really made us feel like, you know, we have a lot to be grateful for, you know, this is not an easy time on anybody. And yet, we have to just treasure this time of waiting and being patient and out of control. Right, none of us can control this. And we're all like losing our minds, because we can't control it. And yet, there's really something so profound being taught to all of us in this waiting and being patient and being grateful, because we all have a lot to be grateful for. And yes, you know, there's some that are struggling so badly right now, but those of us that know that we have to reach out.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 41:45

Yeah, and it's a both and because I think the ones who realize it and need to reach out, there's that gift of, of extending a hand and a warm touch and, you know, hot cup of coffee, something that that just connected brings in. But the other flip side is, you know, I am in a belief that no matter how dark, how dark things get in my life, or in someone else's life, we we can choose gratitude of something. And it could be a simple, it could be a simple thing. It could be you know, I'm grateful that I woke up this morning, I'm grateful

that I have a hot meal this morning. I'm grateful for something. And that practice of gratitude. And sometimes it's a muscle that were like clenched down and you know, clamoring down and saying there's nothing good and there's nothing to be grateful for. But every inch of gratitude every Yes, in your heart or spirit, you know, it changes our DNA somehow some way. And my encouragement to anyone that's listening is whether you're in a place of hope and and, and can give that to someone else and and that's a huge goal with the Jennasis Speaks movement of just to give out hope and encouragement and life and gratitude and model it and bringing community but also just anyone who's really struggling, that just silence your heart for just a moment and take a deep breath in and hear a whisper of something to be grateful for because some something is going to arise up even in the darkest days whether it's a person a face, the situation and just to practice that peace of gratitude and I love coming off of Thanksgiving, you know last week and going into the holidays of you know, I've had close friends over the last three weeks that have lost and I know you have two that have lost loved ones over the last three weeks and you know, can't imagine going into a holiday that we've been isolated and alone and now going through holidays you know at another level of grief and isolation and pain. But know that there's a community of people out here that are extending loving arms towards you as well. So



#### Christi Tripodi 43:52

yeah, and you know i i do just because I know it's such a hard time I guess my my one thing that I'd want to say is just you know, for the people that are grieving at this time of year you know I want so desperately to just tell you to please just you know give yourself permission to do what is best for you at this time of year you know you're going to have a lot of people pulling you because they want to feel better about being closer with you. But that doesn't mean that's what's best for you. It may be better for you to change things up to get away it might be better for you to just say no. I'm just not able to do it and those that love you and truly mine what's best for you are going to understand you know your suffering at this time and know that you need to be alone and you know there's so many things that I did at the holidays because I honestly didn't even want to put up a Christmas tree for many years. I had to do it with some of our kids and because I just couldn't even do it. Um, but every year now 20 years, every Christmas card we have ever sent out has always had a picture of Bobby on it. You know I would make a wreath for him. Every Christmas here every Christmas and go put it down on his grave. You know, there's so many ways that we can add our loved ones, we do things at Cornerstone all the time a candle light Memorial that we have so beautifully to remember each person's loved one, but also like making an ornament, we have an ornament making workshop. So maybe you don't even you're not with the person that lost someone, but you make an ornament in honor of their loved one. And then you give it you know, there's so many ways that you



can help someone that is grieving at this time or even throughout the year, there's so many ways and, you know, I just I wanted to just to say that because it's it is such a hard time. And I think again, what you talked about is just giving permission to people to also allow them to grieve the way they need to grieve. So again, because we're all different, we all need to remember that isn't going to do necessarily what we want them to do, but what they need to do for them. And that's what we have to allow them to

J

Jennifer Malcolm 46:00

powerful. And that's powerful. And the encouragement of this, you know, got compounding what Christie said is, if you're around someone that is grieving, just that unconditional love, and allow them to be offended by their choices, we unaffected by their to be unoffending. So perfect. Their their choice to be alone. It's because it's not about not wanting to be with you it's just about them self care, them giving themselves self care.

C

Christi Tripodi 46:25

So it's so it's so beautiful how you said it, it really is.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 46:29

It's I heard was, quote, clarifying question from our pre interview stuff. Because, um, as we weren't do some research about cornerstone of hopes, programming. There. You your website mentioned or maybe you mentioned that there's trauma loss, and there's complicated loss, and what is the difference between those two things?

C

Christi Tripodi 46:50

Okay, so so for example, traumatic grief is a suicide, a murder. It's maybe somebody that even witnessed a death, and maybe you didn't die. So you have guilt with, you have a lot of suffering with that, that we maybe none of us can really understand. So that's traumatic grief. Complicated grief is a grief that, let's just say you didn't have that, you know, maybe it was your ex husband that died. So you didn't have a good relationship with Him or somebody your sister that you didn't have a good relationship with? That is more of a complicated grief, whether or not it was a really, it's just there's a lot more to it than just the grief. So you have some guilt, maybe or, again, maybe the relationship wasn't the best. At the time. Yeah, yeah. So Wow, it's a lot more. I wish I could say where we were just seeing, you know, grief and just simple things. It's just unfortunately, it's not. Well, the size, our overdoses, all of those have, unfortunately, skyrocketed. It's just not easy.





Jennifer Malcolm 48:06

Yeah, and I think the beautiful part, though, is that you guys provide support in all those areas. So maybe



Christi Tripodi 48:13

We have specific loss groups. And those are, you know, it could be miscarriage, it can be military loss, murder, law, suicide, loss of spouse, loss of child, grandparents group, we have a lot of different groups now. And then because the needs of the community, we're we're trying to meet their needs. So



Jennifer Malcolm 48:33

Which is powerful, because I think that a lot of people associate grief with just, Hey, I lost a significant other, you know, I'm grieving, but to say that there's a support system here, and we'll provide the cornerstone of Hope's contact information as well on our website, just so that you can directly see and connect with the resources there. And to find out, you know, what would we be available if this is something that is resonating with you as you're listening to this story, so let's end with maybe something, a gift to the audience of encouragement, of closing remarks, of hope of love. Knowing that, you know, this message here is fully entrenched in you're not alone. And there is support there. But what would be some closing remarks just to share directly with our audience and specifically, you know, we're mostly women, you know, women oriented audience, that insights or breathes hope or life or just that community or connection that a lot of us may be dealing with through this time,



Christi Tripodi 49:49

Let's say, um, I would say that to remember that there's not something wrong with you. Again, to the extent that you love is the extent that you will grief. And as women, we are so blessed to have these nurturing, loving hearts. That is a gift. I mean, I, I believe it's a gift, my husband, you know, again, is so helpful and complimentary to me as a woman, and he helps to definitely make me better. But I love that we see things about our children and our husbands and, and people in the world that, you know, we just have, I don't want to say I just think it's a deeper different sense of compassion and nurturing, that we as women are so blessed to have it is a gift because we see things that they may not necessarily see. And so there is not something wrong with you. Because you're grieving, I think one of the best things that I see a cornerstone is when I see your man come in, and he is so broken, the loss of his wife, or his son or his daughter, I am I'm in awe of, of just

these incredibly humble people that are saying I need help. I am so broken right now. And I can't even do this. So I am just, I don't want people to think that there's something wrong with them. Because there's not there's actually something so incredibly powerfully beautiful about them. And to the extent that you love is the extent that you will grieve This is not easy, we are forever changed. But that doesn't mean that we can still be so incredibly amazing. See, I always tell people it's not, you know, that day, that memory that moment, it's what and who you become from that day from that, from that moment, it's who you become from that, that is so incredibly powerful. But again, it takes a lot of work. It's not like you're just going to go, Oh, I'm just going to be all better in a year. It just that doesn't happen. And we have to give ourselves and others the permission to not expect. I think as someone who loves somebody who is grieving, we also have to understand that not expect people to be what we want them to be or how much better we expect them to be at a certain point that's just not realistic. So that would be my word of I hope, encouragement, because I really wish that somebody would have said that to me, you know, I, again, it took me a long time. In fact, I think years two and three are harder than your one well, and your wife, your years, years two and three, this is your new reality. Like this is now what your life looks like. And that's really hard to face in years two and three. So I just don't think like, again, our world gives permission for people to grieve, and and we want everybody to be better, be better, be better get fixed, be fixed, you should be fixed. And it's not like that. So I pray and hope that if anything, we were able today to bring an awareness to people to understand that grief really is a process. It's it's not simple. And yet it's very hard work. But what can happen on the other side is so awesome. And I think that's what I love to see. We're blessed to see people for years through the process of what happens when you work through the grief, really hard stuff.

J

Jennifer Malcolm 53:29

Yeah. So the takeaway on that is that it takes work and time. So you have to have an activation to work through your grief. But it's not an overnight or next month or six months. And I think it's powerful, because I would not have heard I mean, intuitively, I would say yes, that makes sense. But I would not have articulated it, that the first year is numbness. And the second and third year is this reality setting in here is my new normal. And that piece of moving on or creating new memories or moving on in life in different ways vacations or holidays or life situations, that becomes harder. And so trying those exploring those new things. Outside of the numbness, I'm sure is another pain, stinking level of grief that you continue to walk through.

C

Christi Tripodi 54:21

Oh, perfectly.



## Jennifer Malcolm 54:24

That's powerful. And my takeaway on it, for those who are listening is I know this is my heart. I know it's Christie and Mark's heart is that you're not alone. You're not alone. You're not alone. You're not alone. And there's resources and I've said this we're not counselors Jennasis Speaks we're not counselor, I'm not a counselor. I am just a connector of people that do great work and have powerful stories and and so absolutely will have cornerstone of hopes, resources and websites so you can get in touch with them directly. And we want to be that connector of people to bring hope and light and healing and joy and uncover Additional love in a world that we are hurting and we're alone and we're isolated. And so I just want to continue just to reiterate, you're not alone. And there are people out there who are wanting you to join a community, of like minded in like mindedness, that is a non judgmental atmosphere that you are welcome just as you are and, and that that is all throughout the heart of you know, Jennasis Speaks as well as cornerstone of hope. Oh, well, thank you. So thank you so much for joining me today. I'm so honored. Have a great one. And thanks for listening today and join us. Next week we will be closing out our season one and I'll be sharing a story about myself that I've not publicly shared yet before. And so we'll be closing out season one and then wrapping up for the holidays and launching Season Two in January. So everyone have a great day. Thank you for listening to the Jennasis Speaks podcast. If you love the show, one of the best things you can do is to share it with a friend. Tell them what you like about it, how it inspires you and invite them to listen. Subscribe to the Jennasis movement to empower women's voices and reclaim the power over your own narrative.