

# Reflections...

on the grief journey

A Publication of Center for Hospice Care

Bereavement Newsletter

[www.cfhcare.org](http://www.cfhcare.org)

Issue 2

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*"Coming to group each week gave me something to look forward to and the chance to talk to others who really understand what I am going through."*

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## **"The Grief Support Group Was Very Helpful to Me!"**

These are the heartfelt words of a young woman who came to a Living With Loss group, seeking support after the death of her husband. This enthusiastic reaction is not uncommon.

A grief support group brings together people who have experienced the death of a loved one and in this safe setting each person can share thoughts and feelings and explore ways of coping. Much has been written on the value of grief support groups but the most credible testimonies are from the participants themselves. This is what some have said about our Living With Loss groups:

### **Call Us Any Time**

(574) 255-1064  
Mishawaka

(574) 264-3321  
Elkhart

(574) 935-4511  
Plymouth

(219) 575-7930  
La Porte

"I felt so bonded with the members of my group. I felt that each of them really cared about me and I felt less alone."

"The understanding support of everyone in the group was the greatest help. It made me know I wasn't going crazy, and I calmed down from what I learned here."

"The education part of this group was very helpful and helped me to realize that all I was going through was 'normal.'"

"I was very sad when it was time for the group to end. I never knew that being part of a group would be so helpful."

"Hearing other's stories was the most helpful part of the group for me. I no longer feel like I am alone."

"The leader was especially thoughtful in the comments, hand-outs and insights into our grief."

"The understanding support of the group was the greatest help."

*The Center for Hospice Care offers many opportunities for attending a grief group at our various locations. A list of our bereavement services and programs is available on our website ([www.cfhcare.org](http://www.cfhcare.org)). Or call one of our offices for times and locations.*





## The Grief Process

*Adapted from J. William Worden*

The grief process is fluid and does not follow a set pattern or set of stages. J. William Worden describes the process of mourning in four tasks.

### The Four Tasks of Mourning:

1. To accept the reality of the loss including acknowledging the facts of the loss, the meaning of the loss and the irreversibility of the loss. This task can include the experience of shock and feeling like you are on "automatic pilot."
2. To process/work through the pain of the grief which includes the physical, emotional and spiritual pain associated with the loss.
3. To adjust to a world without the deceased. The adjustment process includes external adjustments (living without them), internal adjustments (who am I now?) and spiritual adjustments (reframing assumptive world – making sense of and reassessing the world).
4. Find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life.

If you want additional information on the four tasks of mourning or other ways of describing the grief process, please contact the office or visit our website.

## Coming In Future Issues

- Teens and Grief
- Helping Children Grieve
- Gender Differences in Grief
- Special Days – Coping with Anniversaries, Birthdays and Holidays

## Guilt and Regret

"I wish I had not said that to him." "If only I had made her go to the doctor sooner." "I could have been nicer and more patient with him." "Why didn't I tell her I loved her more often?"

Perhaps you have had these or similar thoughts. After your loved one dies, you may find yourself rethinking things you said or did not say. You may become frustrated and possibly feel guilty for what you did or did not do while they were alive. You can get entangled in "I should have," "I could have," and "if only's".

Are you judging yourself too harshly and unrealistically? Human beings are not perfect. No matter how hard you have tried, things may occur that you wish you could go back and change.

It is important to understand the differences between guilt and regret. You feel guilty if you intended to hurt or harm someone. You feel regret if you did something you wish you could change, but you did not mean to harm or hurt our loved one.

Your guilt or regret can teach you to do better now and in the future. It can result in you being a more positive and caring person. There are some things you can do to make amends and to make you feel better about what has happened:

- Write a letter to the person who died to say the things that you need to say to them or to apologize.
- Tell those who are still alive that you love them and care about them. Say "I'm sorry" when you need to.
- Forgive yourself. Tell yourself over and over that you did the best you could at that time and under those circumstances. It is likely the person who died would forgive you for your unintentional mistakes and shortcomings. Say it as often as you need to.
- Forgive the person who died. Your loved ones were not perfect either. Forgiving them allows you to find peace.
- Do kind things for others in your loved one's name.

Usually with time, your guilt and regrets fade. If your guilt and regret persists or are troubling you, consider speaking with a Center for Hospice Care bereavement counselor.

## Recommended Books

***Motherless Daughters***  
by Hope Edelman

***FatherLoss***  
by Neil Chemik

## When An Adult Loses A Parent

The loss of a parent is the most common form of bereavement in this country. Every year millions of people lose one or both parents. But often your friends and coworkers think that, because you are an adult, you do not grieve deeply the loss of a middle aged or older parent. It is widely believed that this type of death does not have a strong impact, especially if the parent had been ill a long time, was very elderly, or living far away. Therefore, you may not get understanding and comfort from others, and you may feel you should not grieve.

You do grieve when your parents die, no matter your age or their age. You grieve the parents of your youth and childhood. With their deaths, you may no longer feel like a son or daughter. Your world is a different place after your parents die. They gave you life. They are your history, a part of your identity. They may have been your role model, your protector, your counselor, and your friend. They may have been the only people who gave you unconditional love or the relationship may have been challenging.

After a parent's death, you no longer have an opportunity to resolve issues with them. Neither they nor you can make amends for things said or not said, for things done or not done. You may find you need to make peace with them and with yourself.

When parents die we become the older generation. Younger family members look to you for guidance and assistance. You are the "next in line" to die, and may find yourself examining your mortality.

At the death of very elderly and ill parents, you probably feel relief mixed with your grief. Their suffering is over, and you may feel they have gone on to a better place. But you miss them. And missing someone can result in emotional pain. Talking about it can help.

## A Personal Reflection: "Am I Going Crazy?"

I've experienced these feelings before; fear, anxiety, loneliness, frustration, anger, disbelief, anguish, longing; but now they all wash over me like waves hitting the rocks on shore, relentlessly beating me up. Am I Going Crazy?! It feels that way some days when these thoughts and feelings are larger than life, larger than me, more than I can handle today. How long will this last? How long can I take these waves of grief? There are times when I feel simply overcome with grief, when I don't feel I can live another minute because the pain is too great. But somehow I live through that next minute, that next hour, and week and month.

As these minutes, hours, days, weeks and months go by, the impact on my senses diminishes slowly. The anguished reality of my loved one's death slowly penetrates each cell of my being. I gradually begin to accept that the unacceptable has happened. My loved one is gone and I am still here. I slowly, painstakingly begin the journey to adjust to all of the changes. As the minutes, hours, days, weeks and months go by, becoming overwhelmed does not seem to happen quite so often. Now, there are days when I experience a few moments of peace and tranquility, and as time moves on those moments happen more often and last longer. And ever so slowly calmness visits me more often, and I take a long, deep breath of relief.

If you continue to feel overwhelmed by intense grief without relief, please call our office for information on services.





# Center for Hospice Care

Life Transition Center  
501 Comfort Place  
Mishawaka, Indiana 46545  
(574) 255-1064

112 South Center Street Suite C  
Plymouth, Indiana 46563  
(574) 935-4511  
(800) 413-9083

22579 Old US 20 East  
Elkhart, Indiana 46563  
(574) 264-3321  
(800) 413-9083

309 West Johnson Road Suite A  
La Porte, Indiana 46350  
(219) 575-7930  
(800) 413-9083

[www.cfhcare.org](http://www.cfhcare.org)

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## Guidelines for Living While Grieving

**Accept Your Sorrow...** You do not have to be "strong." Grieving is not a weakness! For some, it is helpful to allow yourself time to cry; it is a natural expression of grief.

**Talk About Death...** Though family and friends may be uncomfortable at first, it can help to talk about your loved one. If it is difficult to reach out to family, participating in a grief support group allows you to be around others who are grieving. Remember to check in with youth that are grieving.

**Keep Busy...** Do purposeful work that occupies your mind balanced with time set aside to express your grief.

**Eat Well...** Your body benefits from good nourishment during stressful times.

**Exercise Regularly...** Being physically active can lessen stress and help you sleep better. Consult your physician before returning to your old exercise program or starting a new one.

**Sleep Is Important...** Develop a restful sleep pattern and it can help to go to sleep at the same time each night. Talk to your doctor if sleep difficulties persist.

**See Your Doctor...** A physical examination can be important to monitor your health

because emotional distress can lower your resistance to illness.

**Accept Your Understanding of the Death...** You may ask "why" over and over and some questions do not have a satisfying answer. Be patient with yourself as you come to your own understanding.

**Give of Yourself...** Volunteering and helping to ease someone else's pain can lessen your own.

**Creative Expression...** Express your thoughts and feelings through creative activities including writing, drawing, painting, coloring, sculpture, singing, and gardening.

**Seek Inner Strength...** The practices of meditation, yoga, and/or mindfulness may be beneficial. Spend time in nature. For those who practice a faith, staying involved in your faith community can provide guidance and support.

**Get Help...** Grief may overwhelm your usual coping and friends, family and your usual resources may not know how to support you through intense grief reactions. Center for Hospice Care bereavement counselors are here to help.

*If you would like to stop receiving Reflections, please contact the nearest office.*