

Reflections...

on the grief journey

A Publication of Center for Hospice Care

Bereavement Newsletter

www.cfhcare.org

Issue 1

Center for Hospice Care is Here to Help

Grief is nature's way of healing a broken heart. Center for Hospice Care bereavement counselors can journey with you, you are not alone. *We are here to help.*

Grief is Natural and Expected

We mourn the death of those who are significant in our lives and grief impacts our whole being. We can experience emotional, physical, behavioral, spiritual and cognitive grief reactions. Our grief reactions, including sadness, can disrupt everyday routines of life. You might experience a loss of appetite, difficulty concentrating and your sleep patterns might be affected. It may seem that the very center of your being revolves around the loss. The intensity of your grief reactions may lead to a sense of feeling out of control, powerless and overwhelmed. This feeling may be present not just in those first few days, but in the first few months, and even throughout the

first year of grieving. There are many factors that impact our mourning including our physical health, our personalities, our beliefs and values, our support from family and friends, and the circumstances of our loved one's illness and death. You may experience a range of emotions like loneliness, sadness, anger, guilt, relief, and emptiness. You may ask why and wonder about the meaning of life. Your grief is personal and unique. Your relationship with your loved one was unique. Grief is natural and expected after a death and when support and/or guidance is needed, our bereavement counselors are here to help.



Call Us Any Time

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Mishawaka

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(574) 935-4511
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*Grieving is as natural as crying when you are hurt,
sleeping when you are tired,
eating when you are hungry,
or sneezing when your nose itches.
It is nature's way of healing a broken heart.*

*A cut finger is numb before it bleeds,
it bleeds until it begins to heal,*

*it forms a scab and itches until, finally,
the scab is gone and a small scar is left
where once there was a wound.*

*Grief is the deepest wound you have ever had.
Like a cut finger, it goes through stages
and leaves a scar.*

– Doug Manning

Hospice Is Here For You!

Dear Hospice Families,

We continue to think about you. Because we understand that the needs of the bereaved continue for some time after the death of a loved one, bereavement services are available to you and anyone else affected by this loss.

Services include:

- **REFLECTIONS...on the grief journey**
During this year, you will periodically receive issues of *Reflections* offering you information on the grief process and suggestions for coping. If you ever want to stop receiving *Reflections*, please contact the office nearest to you.
- **PHONE CONTACTS from our Bereavement Team**
Our bereavement staff and/or trained bereavement volunteers can check with you periodically throughout this year. If you would like this service, please call the office closest to you.
- **YOU CAN CALL-or-COME IN FOR COUNSELING**
Our Bereavement Counselors provide individual and family grief counseling. Contact our office if you want more information.
- **IF YOU LIVE AWAY FROM NORTHERN INDIANA**
We can recommend a hospice in your area with programs that will meet your needs. Call for information on bereavement resources in your community.
- **OUR SUPPORT GROUPS and other BEREAVEMENT SERVICES**
The Center for Hospice Care offers a variety of grief support groups and events throughout the year at each office. An annual memorial service and services for children and teens are also available for you, your family and your friends.

The ways in which people experience grief and loss are many and varied. There is no timetable for grief, no "right way" to grieve and our clients have shared that bereavement services have been helpful.

**The Bereavement Team at
Center for Hospice Care**

Keeping a Journal Can Be Helpful

Many people who have experienced the death of a loved one have found keeping a written journal of thoughts, feelings and activities during their grief journeys helpful. Some people may feel like they do not know "how to do it," but in reality, there is no wrong way to keep a journal. Whether one writes intricate, daily journal entries in great detail, a letter to the deceased or spontaneous thoughts in incomplete sentences, the importance of a journal is for the writer. A journal offers the writer a record of their feelings and experiences that they can go back to at a later date if they choose. Often people are surprised when looking back at how far they have come on their journeys. Some individuals who kept a journal have discovered the following benefits:

- Reducing and releasing stress and pain
- Clarifying thoughts and feelings during a time when everything else seems confusing
- Help in making decisions
- Feeling a connection to a loved one
- Finding something helpful to do, even if it is in the middle of a long, lonely night

"A journal is a place free of editors, critics, teachers, and well-meaning but ruinous relatives and friends. In a journal, thought and feeling can come together without self-consciousness." ~Pat Schneider

Coming In Future Issues

- Benefits of Grief Groups
- Books That Help
- Grief Cycle
- When an Adult Loses a Parent

“Grief is the price we pay for love”

One way to think of the grief journey is as a time where you are transitioning from physically sharing your life with your loved ones to holding them forever in your hearts. This can be a painful transition and for most of us, accepting this new reality is a gradual process with many ups and downs along the way.

One suggestion that has helped others is to establish an actual physical space where you can go “to be together with” your loved one. For some this may be at the grave or a place that holds special memories with your loved one. If this isn’t possible or convenient, you may wish to consider designating a spot in your home or yard.

- A place where you can remember and even “talk” to your loved one
- Individualize with items that bring you comfort, like photos, candles and personal mementos
- A place to acknowledge your loss and express your grief

An advantage of designating a special place is that it can help to set boundaries on your grief. After times of grieving, you can go from this place to focus on the daily routines of life. You can leave knowing that you can come back at any time. As your loss becomes more integrated into your life, you will likely find yourself using this space less and less. But in these early days following your loss, a special place can be a powerful tool for healing.

How Long Does Grief Last?

“Will the pain and grief ever go away!?”

“Sometimes I am afraid that I will always feel the way I feel now.” “Will I ever laugh or be happy again?”

The grief you feel when someone very close to you dies can be intense and painful. Several factors can affect your grief including whether you lived together, how close you were emotionally, additional losses, and your support system.

Over time, you can begin to feel better in small ways. Your grief may feel less intense, you may experience more good days and find yourself laughing again. You can become impatient with your grief and long to feel like you did before your loved one died. With time, a new way of living emerges.



Tears and Crying

Tears are a natural cleansing and healing mechanism. Human tears contain chemicals that build up during stress. Most people report that they feel better after crying. They are less angry and less sad. The ability to cry emotional tears is one way we differ from animals. Tears are not a weakness; they are a natural and normal way to relieve sadness and tension.

Women tend to be more comfortable with their tears, but men also find crying an effective release of tension. It is very important when we are upset to find a safe place and time and allow ourselves to cry. Tears can be our silent language of grief.

Center for Hospice Care

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Grief Can...

- Take longer than people expect
- Take a lot of your emotional energy
- Involve many changes, feelings and reactions
- Include feelings of anger and/or guilt
- Lower your self-esteem
- Result in difficulty in making decisions
- Overwhelm our usual coping tools
- Include physical symptoms like headaches and fatigue (please talk with your doctor)
- Hit hard at unexpected times
- Impact most areas of your life (physical, emotional, social, spiritual)
- Result in changes to sleep and appetite
- Result in tears at unexpected times and places
- Result in questions about spirituality, beliefs and faith
- Also be felt for other things you have lost (future plans, hopes, dreams, relationships)
- Be very lonely

"I Am A Grieving Person"

I seem to be falling apart.

*My attention span
can be measured in seconds.*

My patience in minutes.

I cry at the drop of a hat.

I forget to sign the checks.

*Half of everything in the house
is misplaced.*

*Feelings of anxiety and restlessness
are my constant companions.*

Rainy days seem extra dreary.

Sunny days seem an outrage.

*Other people's pain and frustration
seem insignificant.*

Laughing, happy people

seem out of place in my world.

It has become routine to feel half crazy.

I am normal I am told.

I am a newly grieving person.

--- Anonymous

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