

BEREAVEMENT NEWSLETTER

Perspectives On Loss And Grief

Volume Eleven

Dear Friends of Hospice:

For the past year you have been receiving newsletters from Hospice of Siouxland, and we sincerely hope that you have found them helpful. We have tried to address many of the issues with which you have had to deal during the first year of your grief.

This is the final copy of the Bereavement Newsletter. We are aware that this is not the end of your grief, but it is our hope that you can see progress in yourself and have come to some understanding, acceptance, and hope. Please call us if we can be of help in some additional way.

Sincerely,
The Hospice Bereavement Team

FINDING HOPE

Webster defines hope as a desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment.

You may feel that your hopes for the future died with your loved one, and a feeling of hopelessness was left in its place. You have experienced many things as you struggle to find meaning in what has happened to you. Hope is essential to survival, and it is important to spend some time thinking about how you define it. Eventually, as you work through your grief, tomorrow seems less like an ordeal and more like an opportunity. It happens gradually, but it does happen. One day we realize that we are again capable of feeling inspiration and anticipation. Death brings life more clearly into focus and allows us to identify what is of real importance.

What can you hope for as you grieve? You can hope that you will grow from the experience. You can hope that you will be able to put what has happened to positive use someday, maybe for yourself, maybe for others. If you haven't been able to experience hope, you can hope that someday it will return. In the beginning of the journey through grief, you may have hoped for a good night's sleep or just to get through the day. Now you may be ready to make some plans for your future and set some goals.

You can hope that as this loss is integrated into your life experience, you will be more prepared to face other losses in your life which will inevitably occur. You can hope that others will continue to sustain you during those lonely times. You can hope that you will appreciate the

beauty of nature and find comfort in the gifts of creation. You can hope that tomorrow will be a better day. You are a survivor, and the gift of opportunity is yours. With hope, you can heal.

AARVY AARDVARK FINDS HOPE by Donna O'Toole, is a story for people of all ages about loving and losing, friendship and hope. In the final pages, Aarvy and Ralph Rabbit discover hope. I think they express it well, and I hope you will enjoy it.

Together Aarvy and Ralph placed Clarice the bird into the hole in the ground. They laid green leaves over her blue and orange feathers. Then Ralph stepped back and looked at Aarvy. He was waiting.

"You have to say goodbye, Aarvy," he said. "It's very hard, but you have to. If we never say goodbye, we never find out how to go on. Not really. And if we can't go on, how can we ever show others how beautiful Clarice was?"

"Saying goodbye doesn't mean you have to forget Clarice, Aarvy," Ralph said gently. "It means you accept what is. Then you'll be free to remember without it hurting so much. By letting go of Clarice you'll find you have more energy for living. You might even find that saying goodbye helps you love yourself and others more than before. I think Clarice would like that, Aarvy."

Aarvy just looked at his friend Ralph Rabbit. He felt a little confused. But he trusted Ralph, and inside himself Ralph's words felt comfortable.

Aarvy nodded.

"Come, my friend," said Ralph. "Let us sing."

It wasn't easy, but they did sing. They sang,

Clarice----Clarice

oh beautiful one

you lived

you played

you flyed

you died,

you died,

Clarice----Clarice. . . .

They sang it many times. They didn't count how many. After a while they found themselves being very still again.

It was Aarvy Aardvark who pushed the first clump of dirt into the grave.

Aarvy was crying, but he didn't feel weak. He felt strong. Stronger than he could ever remember feeling.

He could sing to Clarice. He could sing. Imagine!

In a fleeting thought he wondered how it would feel to whistle again. To whistle...and maybe even to jump again.

Aarvy looked at Ralph Rabbit. Ralph was crying too. But when Ralph looked at Aarvy they both smiled...right through their tears.

They stood very close together...paw to paw.

"We'd better go now," said Ralph.

As Ralph and Aarvy lifted their heads they saw the sky aglow with the last colors made by the setting sun.

It made Aarvy think about rainbows and their beautiful colors. He could remember every one.

Then he remembered something that until that very moment he had forgotten. He remembered that Clarice had told him that rainbows happen when the weather is changing.

“Tomorrow,” said Aarvy, when they were almost to their homes, “tomorrow I will start practicing my whistling.”

“And perhaps...Perhaps someday I will play again.” “Perhaps, someday soon, we will play together.”

LAUGHTER AND LOSS

“If you can find humor in anything...you can survive it.”----Bill Cosby

Just days after his son was killed, comedian Bill Cosby resumed taping his TV series and performed at two live show. With laughter and tears, he told of his son’s funeral. While many thought that Cosby had returned to work too soon, he felt otherwise. In his grief, one of America’s top entertainers and most talented comedians said, “It’s time for me to tell the people that we have to laugh...we’ve got to laugh.”

Laughter and humor are key elements in helping us go on with our life after a loss. I am not saying that grief is not important. But prolonged grief can be detrimental. Tears bring us down. Laughter lifts us up. Humor can alter any situation and help us cope at the very instant we are laughing.

Humor allows us to cope with pain in three ways:

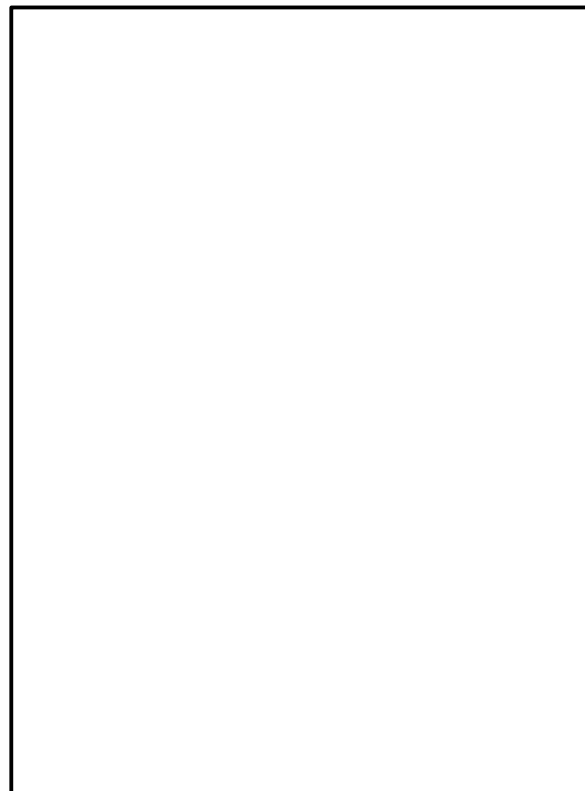
...When we are dealing with death, we are constantly being dragged down by the event: Humor diverts our attention and lifts our sagging spirits.

...Dealing with death is stressful: Humor decreases our stress and tension.

...In the midst of death, life feels out of balance: Humor provides fresh perspective and power in a powerless situation.

When we are in pain and wish that something would “take us away,” humor does exactly that. It may be for only a brief moment but it distracts us from our pain and gives us hope to embrace life again. If we can laugh again, we can live again.

Yes, it is difficult to deal with the loss of a loved one. Yes, it may seem like it is the darkest time of our life. Still, there are lighter moments among the dark ones. We must be willing to let some of those tiny rays of lightness in.



I'd like to share a story told to me by a woman who lost her husband in an airline crash. About a month after the accident, a public ceremony was to take place to honor the dead. Having been hounded by the press over the past month, the woman did not want to be at what probably would be another media circus.

A neighbor suggested that they drive to a newly opened shopping mall. As they were walking around the mall, the funniest thought came to the widow. She kept hearing her deceased husband say to her, "They're dedicating a memorial to me today and what is my wife doing?" **SHE'S SHOPPING! TYPICAL!**

"My friend and I had a good laugh," the widow said, "and I felt a short period of relief. Now I knew that it might be possible to laugh and feel alive again, even if it was only in small doses."

*Excerpts from an article in "Journeys"
By Allen Klein, MA*

Other Resources You Might Find Helpful

Welcoming Change by James E. Miller.
Addresses the issue of discovering hope in time of life transitions.

If I Could Just See Hope. Darcie Sims looks at grief with humor and addresses topics such as: "Normal Isn't Normal Anymore", "So You Think You're Going Crazy" "Memories: What Used To Be", and many more.

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