

BEREAVEMENT NEWSLETTER

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

How will I ever get through this terrible grief?

Merlin the Magician, in the story of King Arthur, said: “When you’re sad, learn something.”

At times it seems as if you have no control over what is happening to you. Grief leaves you physically and emotionally out-of-kilter. Family and friends may offer support but don’t know what you need. Others may hesitate to contact you because of their own discomfort. You know best what you need, but you may be afraid to ask for help. This month we are offering some suggestions for things you can do to regain and maintain your physical, emotional, and spiritual health. We hope that you will take a deep breath, get comfortable, and consider these ideas:

- Be patient with yourself as you journey through this painful time. Some days will be better than others.
- Invite a friend to eat with you.
- Don’t try to escape with alcohol. (it’s a depressant)
- Exercise every day. (no excuses; anyone can at least stretch)
- Get enough rest.
- Don’t isolate yourself.

- Don’t measure your grief with anyone else’s.
- Find someone you can talk to.
- Let friends and family know that you want to talk about your loved one.
- Try a new hobby or activity.
- Schedule an activity for a particularly difficult time. (e.g. Sundays)
- Accept help when it is offered.
- Make lists. (forgetfulness is normal but adds to your stress)

- Don’t make a lot of changes, but consider doing things a little differently (e.g. rearrange furniture; eat in a different place)
- Start with only those things that are important and necessary.
- Take time out (put it on your list) to enjoy the beauty of a day. (e.g. watch the neighbor children play, listen to your favorite music, etc.)
- Plan things to look forward to.

- Think of a response to those who offer unhelpful advice. (e.g. “Thank you for your concern, but I need to work this out in my own way.”)
 - If faith issues are troubling you, schedule a visit with your clergy; talk with a trusted friend; or look for books that address the problem.
 - Make a list of the things that are the most troubling to you. Identify those things that you can do something about. What things can someone else help with?
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- Have conversations with your loved one. (It’s not crazy to do that)
 - Talk to others about your loved one.
 - Start a journal. Record memories, feelings, worries, things you cannot say out loud. (It’s a good way to sort out what’s in your head)
 - Reach out to others. (It can be a plate of cookies and a short visit to a shut-in or a scheduled time to volunteer at the hospital)
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- Review your achievement list at the end of the day and congratulate yourself on getting through it.
 - Consider joining a support group. (No one wants to go, but nearly all who do are glad they did)
 - Accept the idea that you can’t detour around grief. The journey is difficult, but there are caring guides and rest areas.
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- Be aware of your physical health. Schedule a complete check-up.
 - Don’t set a timetable for your grief.
 - Treat yourself well.
 - Find ways to commemorate or honor your loved one. (e.g: a memorial gift to an organization that was important to him/her; plant a tree)
 - Trust yourself. Do what is right for you.

Hopefully, this list will offer something that will be helpful to you and will encourage you to consider ways to regain your well-being and invest in your future.

*“Grief is like the wind.
When it’s blowing hard,
you adjust your sails and run before it.
If it blows too hard, you stay in the harbor,
close the hatches and don’t take calls.
When it’s gentle, you go sailing, have a picnic, take a swim.
You go wherever it takes you.
There are no bulwarks to withstand it.
Should you erect one,
it will eventually tire of the game and blow the walls in.*

(Barbara Lazear Ascher, “Landscape Without Gravity”)

“Time heals,” many people say.

*It may,
It may help to dull your pain.*

*But the medicine of time taken by itself
Is not sure.*

Time is neutral

What helps is what you do with time.

*Are you using the time to face up to
The fact that the one you loved is dead?*

*Are you using the time to give vent
To your fears and anxieties?*

*Are you using the time to create a
Capacity for enjoyment without feeling guilty?*

*Are you using the time to build a
Life with new relationships?*

Is there an upward slope of improvement?

You must help time to do its healing.

*By Earl A. Grollman
“Living When a Loved One Has Died”*

BIBLIOTHERAPY

For centuries, people have realized the beneficial effects of books in helping families through misfortune. A new term was coined sixty years ago, *bibliotherapy*. It simply means “helping with books.”

Reading is a private experience. As you read, you are able to get in touch with your feelings in a safe place. You learn more about the grieving process even as you find validation for your own thoughts and feelings.

Books can help children as well as adults. You might begin by reading the book yourself. Perhaps in discussing the contents together with your children, you may gain new perspectives for yourself.

Even though the term bibliotherapy is recent, the concept goes as far back as ancient Greece, where the door of the library at Thebes bore the inscription: **“HEALING PLACE OF THE SOUL.”**

*Excerpts from an article in “Journeys”
By Rabbi Earl A. Grollman*

In each issue of “Bereavement Newsletter”, we are suggesting books on grief, but there are many other excellent resources. You may want to look at the library or browse in the local bookstores for more titles. We also recommend the Centering Corporation in Omaha. It is a grief resource center. You can call them at 1-402-553-1200 for a free catalog.

Other Resources You Might Find Helpful:

More Than Surviving: Caring for Yourself While You Grieve by Kelly Osmont. Since grief affects us physically also, this book talks about staying well and grieving healthy.

Safe Passage: Words to Help the Grieving Hold Fast and Let Go by Molly Fumia. 274 meditations on grieving.

One You Love Has Died: Ideas for How Your Grief can Help You Heal by James E. Miller. Suggestions on dealing gradually and constructively with loss.

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To contact a Bereavement Coordinator please call Hospice of Siouxland at the number listed above.

Written and Compiled by: Pat Van Bramer, RN and Ruth E. Meisgeier, MSE