



Dear Bereaved,

In the time since your loved one has died, you have undoubtedly experienced a number of different feelings. You may be asking yourself if these feelings are normal or "right." Although you probably expected to feel a deep sense of sadness or loss, you may be surprised to find other feelings surface, such as anger, guilt or relief.

When something happens outside of our control, we may feel frustrated, cheated or angry. Certainly the loss of an important person in our lives confronts us with a sense of helplessness and may leave us feeling abandoned. It is not unusual to experience anger at the person who has died. Our attempt to understand and make sense of death may trigger feelings of guilt and regret. We may find ourselves wishing we could have done something differently.

Relief, on the other hand, may come from knowing that your loved one is no longer suffering and what may have been a long and difficult time for your family has ended. It is normal and natural to feel relieved; it does not mean you are not grieving enough.

Learning more about the experience of grief allows us to have a more accepting attitude toward our own changing feelings. We have enclosed a bibliography with brief descriptions of current books about loss and grief. Most of these books are available through our lending library. Please feel free to borrow any that you find of interest. We are also enclosing valuable thoughts summarized from a book called The Courage to Grieve by Judy Tatelbaum. Learning that others have felt the same way and have survived may bring you some comfort.

Sincerely,

Margaret Hartsook
Grief Counselor

Nancy Jakobsson
Director of Pathways for Grief and Loss

Amanda Hillman
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PATHWAYS HOSPICE RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

These titles are available in the Pathways Hospice library located at 305 Carpenter Road, Fort Collins. Dewey numbers precede the titles for use in the library.

General

- 811.54 Fu/ Fumia, Molly. *Safe Passage* (2003). This book is composed of short meditations on each page that reflect the changing process of grief towards a new reality.
- 155.937 Fi/ Fitzgerald, Helen. *The Mourning Handbook* (1995). A non-judgmental book with no “shoulds” or timetables. It covers eventualities for any type of death in a clear style. Sections are divided so they can be read as needed.
- 153.12 Edgar, Robin. *In My Mother’s Kitchen: An Introduction to the Healing Power of Reminiscence* (2003). Using memories to preserve family traditions.
- 155.937 Gr/ Grollman, Earl. *Living When a Loved One Has Died* (1997). Reviews the individual reactions to loss and some of the pitfalls. Ideas about how to slowly build new lives and to heal.
- 155.937 Sa/ Sanders, Catherine. *Surviving Grief..and Learning to Live Again* (1992). Presents an understanding of the pain, isolation, rage, guilt, anxiety and intense sadness that can occur when facing loss. The natural process of readjustment and renewal are discussed. Information on the different experiences with the death of a mate, parent, child, are included.
- 155.937 Wo/ Wolfelt, Alan. *Understanding Grief: Helping Yourself Heal* (1992). A classic resource helps guide the bereaved person through loss and provides insights into working through the personal grief process.

Of Interest to Men

- 155.93 Go/ Golden, Thomas. *Swallowed by a Snake: The gift to the Masculine Side of Healing* (2000). Discusses how the genders differ in their healing and gives examples of successful and unique healing strategies.
- 155.937 Pe/ Petrie, Ron. *Into the Cave: When Men Grieve* (2001). Looks at the differences between men and women as they go through the grieving process. Gives insight and direction.

Of Interest to Teens Located on Teen Shelf to the left of the computer in HLC library

- 155.937 Teens/ Gootman, Marilyn. *When a Friend Dies* (1994). A book for teens about grieving and healing. Short, easy-read book for teens grieving the death of a friend.

Of Interest for Parents

- 155.937 Jo/ Johnson, Joy. *Keys to Helping Children Deal with Death and Grief* (1999). Helping parents explain death to children. Includes sections on the process of grief, concepts according to age, death education, the funeral and provides a glossary and lists of resources.
- 155.937 McC/ McCracken, Anne. *A Broken Heart Still Beats: After Your Child Dies* (1998). A collection of poetry, fiction, and essays compiled by authors who experienced the death of a child.

155.93708 Wo/ Wolfelt, Alan. *Healing a Parent's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas* (1992). Offers ideas that help parents understand and reconcile grief. Covers challenges of dealing with marital stress, helping surviving siblings, and exploring feelings of guilt.

Of Interest for Grandparents

155.937 Gerner, Margaret. *For Bereaved Grandparents* (2004). A gentle resource that addresses the issue about grief, helping your grieving child, what you can do and holidays.

155.937 Galinsky, Nadine. *When a Grandchild Dies: What to do, What to say, How to Cope* (1999). A guide for newly bereaved grandparents working through their grief while comforting their children. Includes stories and quotes from grandparents.

Of Interest for Children Located in Children's Bookshelf in HLC library

JUV Fic 6-12 year-olds AL/ Alexander, Alesia. *Mural for Mamita* (2002). A story about a young girl whose Mamita has cancer and later dies. The child remembers all the special things and gets everyone together to create a mural. (HLC library has English and Spanish copies.)

JUV 155.937 3-6 year-olds. Br/ Brown, Marc and Laurie. *When Dinosaurs Dies: A Guide to Understanding Death* (1996). This guide dispels myths and provides answers to some of the most common questions: Why does someone die? What does dead mean? What comes after death?

JUV Fic/Fe 3-6 year-olds. Ferguson, Dorothy. *A Bunch of Balloons* (1992). Compares the death of a loved one with the letting go of a balloon. Looks at what is lost but what is still left. Includes a message to parents.

Of Interest for Spouses

306.88 Ca/ Caine, Lynn. *Being a Widow* (1990). This author provides comfort and guidance to women trying to carry on. The universal issues of grief, depression, legal and financial problems and more are included.

306.88 Gi/ Ginsburg, Genevieve. *Widow: Rebuilding Your Life* (1997). Writing from her own experiences as a widow, author Ginsburg dispels the myths and disputes the rules, encouraging the widow to begin her new life in her own way and in her own time.

Grief: A Normal Response To Loss

Beginning in childhood, many people are taught to face life's crises with a "stiff upper lip" to "bear up and be strong." We often fear that any show of emotion (particularly tears) will be interpreted by others as a sign of weakness. —"He's falling apart" or "she's going to pieces."

One of the tragedies in our society today is that many bereaved family members and friends experience their grief alone, feeling "there must be something wrong with me; certainly, no one I know has ever felt or behaved in these strange ways." Fearful of embarrassment or of appearing "crazy" to others, many bereaved persons hide their true feelings.

It is important to realize that what you are experiencing in your grief is a normal, natural and expected response to the loss of a significant person in your life. The following are descriptions by bereaved individuals of the grief experience. (Your grief reaction may manifest itself in any one or more of these ways.)

Physical Aspects of Grief:

- "I feel sick to my stomach...I can't eat."
- "I have trouble getting to sleep and when I finally do, I sleep only a few hours before I'm up again."

Other Physical Reactions:

- General weakness and fatigue
- Heavy feeling in the chest
- Over sensitivity to noise
- Feeling of emptiness
- Dizziness or headaches
- Tightness in the throat
- Shortness of breath
- Outburst of sobbing
- Nausea

Mental and Motivational Aspects of Grief:

- "I can't seem to get organized. I'm up and down a hundred times during the day and never accomplish anything."
- "I keep thinking about how it all happened over and over again in my mind. I guess I'm trying to make some sense out of it all."
- "I think I'm losing my mind. I can't concentrate on anything. I can't even decide what to wear today."
- "Yesterday I heard my loved one call for me in the night and today I thought I saw him rocking in his chair."

Other Mental Manifestations Include:

- Lack of initiative
- Tension and anxiety
- Forgetfulness
- Feelings of unreality

Emotional Reactions:

- "If only I had told her one more time, I love you. If only..."
- "He should have gone to the doctor months ago."
- "The nights and weekends are the worst for me —empty and lonely."
- "It's as if anytime now, he'll call or come walking through the door. I keep thinking of things to tell him."

Grief: A Normal Response To Loss (*Continued*)

Other Emotional Reactions:

- Feelings of anguish
- Depression
- Anger
- Sadness
- Guilt
- Loneliness
- Self-pity
- Emptiness
- Isolation
- Resentment
- Abandonment
- Loss of self-esteem

Interpersonal Problems:

- “I thought this would bring us closer together...instead we constantly bicker. When I’m feeling up he’s depressed. And when he’s up, I’m down.”

Other Social Reactions:

- Tendency to respond to others with anger or adaptability
- Loss of spontaneity

Spiritual Reactions:

- “If my faith were stronger, I would be able to handle this.”
- “If I really believed, this wouldn’t have happened.”

Other Spiritual Reactions:

- Anger with God
- Doubts about the reality of God’s existence
- Questioning, “Why did this happen?”
- Questioning the meaning of life

Grief is a very unique and individual experience. Although there are many common expressions of feelings that we each may share with others who have gone through similar losses, each of us journey through grief in our own way. If you would like to talk to a grief counselor, please call the Hospice office. We are here to offer you support and guidance during this difficult time.

Needs of the Bereaved

Time: You still need time alone with others whom you trust and who will listen when you need to talk...months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings that go along with loss.

Rest, Relaxation, Exercise, Nourishment, Diversion: You may need extra amounts of things you needed before—hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a “cause” to draw you out of your mourning. Grief is an exhausting emotional process. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people and things you love.

Security: Get help on things that are stressful (e.g., financial matters, parenting, etc.). Let yourself be close to those you trust. Getting back into a routine helps. You may need to let yourself do things at your own pace.

Hope: You may find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing what helped them and realizing that they have recovered can help give you hope that your grief, too, will become less raw and painful.

Caring: Try to let yourself accept expressions of caring from others, even though they may at times feel awkward. Helping a friend or relative who is suffering the same loss may bring a feeling of closeness with that person.

Goals: For a while, it will seem that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to—like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month—helps you get through the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a rule of thumb. At first, don't be surprised if your enjoyment of these things is not the same. This is normal. As time passes, you may need to work on some longer-range goals to give some structure and direction to your life. Counseling may help with this.

Small Pleasures: Do not underestimate the healing of small pleasures—sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food, etc. Little things like these can be small steps toward regaining your pleasure in life itself.

Permission to Backslide: Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair or anger. This is often the nature of grief, and it may happen over and over for a while. It happens because we, as humans, cannot take in all the pain and meaning of death at once. We let it in a little at a time, and with each new step in awareness, we re-experience fresh pain.

What is NOT helpful...

Drugs: Even medication used to help people get through periods of shock under a physician's guidance may prolong and delay the necessary process of grieving. We cannot prevent or cure grief. The only way out is through.

*Taken from—The Courage to Grieve by Judy Tatelbaum, MSW
Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1980*

Web Sites for Grief Support

General:

<http://www.hospicefoundation.org/>

<http://dougy.org/>

<http://griefshare.org/>

<http://www.death-dying.com/>

<http://growthhouse.org/death.html>

<http://griefnet.org/>

<http://www.compassionatefriends.org/>

<http://goodgriefresources.com/>

<http://www.goodgrief.org/>

Loss of a Member of the Armed Forces:

<http://taps.org/>

Loss from Suicide:

<http://www.heartbeatsurvivorsaftersuicide.org/>

<http://www.suicideresourcecenter.org/>

Loss of a Child:

<http://misschildren.org/>

<http://aheartbreakingchoice.com/>
(terminated pregnancy)

<http://www.erichad.com/>

Loss of a Spouse/Partner:

<http://www.youngwidow.org/>

<http://www.widownet.org/>

<http://griefandrecovery.com/>

Loss of a Mother:

<http://motherlessdaughtersbiz.com/>
(for daughters)