

Bereavement news for people living with grief



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henryford.com

Turning the corner

After Mike died, grief became a large part of who I was, an all-consuming horror that rarely took a back seat. But slowly, so slowly I was unaware of its happening, I began to heal. I gradually, some believed too gradually, recovered to the point where I am now. I wish with all my heart that Mike was here, but he's not - only me - and a survivor must learn to build a new life or become a career griever.

Here lies the new problem - How? At first I believed it would be as simple as deciding it was time. What a cruel joke that was! I have learned that the degree to which someone experiences loneliness directly affects their ability to socialize. The more things a couple had in common and enjoyed doing together, the harder it is to begin again. It's like learning to walk and talk and start school all over again. Your history is you and your partner. Your future begins with you alone. It's obvious that it's frightening. You realize the socialization skills of a single person are different and must be reacquired. Just like a teenager, long-term goals must be thought about and new likes and dislikes determined.

All of this can be overwhelming and self-defeating. After the first couple of attempts, one thing becomes painfully obvious. Success is most likely achieved in small, almost baby like steps. The new you won't emerge just because you think you're ready. Last but far from least, know it's a tough corner to turn. There will be setbacks, pain and

time of eroding self-confidence. It will hurt and you will be tempted to turn around to go back. Please don't. Happiness, whether a little or a lot, must be sought after and fought for; always keeping that "right turn" in sight.

Written by Donna

(Donna's husband died several years ago. She now co-facilitates a Bereavement Support Group)





Making summer fun again

Exerpts from Alisha Krukowski

- **Take turns describing your dream vacation with your loved ones.** It can be one that you took, or one that you wish to take. After family members share their ideas, talk about how to make it a reality. For example, if the plans fit your budget like a picnic in a park, make it happen. If your 6 y/o says he would like to go Ice Fishing in Alaska with his father, build an igloo out of ice cubes in the bathtub. Add a small amount of water, drop in some goldfish crackers, grab a kitchen strainer or a measuring cup, and go fish! It's okay to be silly.
- **Look through old family photos, and find some favorites from summer months if you have them.** Tell stories about what was happening in them, especially if photos were taken before children were born or old enough to remember. Create new memories through stories you have to share. Encourage kids to make up stories about what they think is happening in the photo.
- **Go to your local travel agent and get a few brochures for attractions within your budget you've never been to before.** Spread brochures out on floor let the children pick which one they would like to go to. Talk about what your loved one who died would have loved about this trip. Help children to realize your loved one can still be included in new activities, and it's okay to have fun without him physically present.
- **If your family is taking a vacation to a place that you used to go with your loved one, talk about how you will celebrate your loved one's memory while you are there.** Take a nature walk, write your loved one's name in the sand and surround with seashells or go to your loved one's favorite pizza place. You may even want to do something different every day to honor your loved one- it's totally up to you and your children.

Is it possible to take a break from grief?

Exerpts from Judy Brizendine

It is not only possible, but necessary to take a break from grief! Grief is one of the most difficult experiences any of us will face in life. Stop and Think! The grief process is not quick. Its pain is piercing and invades all parts of our life. How long can anyone stand this kind of intensity and penetrating focus without a break?

Taking a break will mean different things to different people. Taking a break is one of the most respectful things you can do for yourself and your journey. Taking a break from grief helps you regain physical strength, emotional courage, determination, and necessary hope so you can "keep on keeping on" through your grief journey.

Knowing this is easier said than done here are a few suggestions:

A "grief break" may mean:

- Changing the scenery of your mind and heart; a vacation away from home.
- Losing yourself in a book, movie or play.
- Having an enjoyable time with a friend.
- Escaping into a hobby that consumes your attention and creativity.
- Spending time getting caught up in the laughter and wonder of a child or grandchild.
- Taking a long-needed rest for your weary mind and body, getting a massage, or visiting a spa retreat.

Make it your own and make it meaningful. What do you need and how will the break serve you best?

The bereavement process

Grief is a natural and normal response to the death of someone we love. The emotions, moods, thoughts and experiences are many and varied. It is not something to be “gotten over” but something to be worked through. Each person works through their grief in their own way and in their own time. We never “get over” the death but we learn to live with it. The pain is lessened and the burden lightened.

Grieving is not neat and orderly. People drift in and out of the various stages and not everyone experiences all of the stages. Several stages can be experienced at the same time. The depth and duration of grief is unique. Personality, previous losses, the intensity of the relationships, the age of the mourner and of the person who has died all affect the process.

Remember, grieving is healthy and normal. Relationships bring joy and pain. We grieve at the death of others and realize the value and costliness of relationships. If we understand what we are going through and how it is affecting us, we will have more realistic expectations about our recovery. Let us consider some of the reactions, feelings, thoughts and interactions of those who mourn.

Why?

Often we keep asking “Why?” “Why did he/she have to die?” We don’t necessarily expect an answer, but the question “WHY” seems to need to be asked repeatedly in an effort to make sense of the loss. The question may be unanswered, but it is important to ask the question until we can take the step of letting the question go.

Repetition:

We may find that we are saying almost the same thing to the same people. The same thoughts keep running through our heads. In saying the words and hearing ourselves over and over again, it helps us to believe what has happened. It is important to find a friend(s) who will listen, especially someone who has experienced a similar sorrow..

Guilt:

Many people are tortured by “if only”, and “what if.” If only I had taken the time to listen and visit. We tend to blame ourselves for something we did/didn’t do that may have contributed to the death or for things that we wish we had done for our loved one. Feelings of guilt are normal though often not realistic. It is best not to push down the guilt. Talk about it until it can be let go. Hopefully, in time, we will realize that we did the best we could under the circumstances. We are not perfect. The past is behind us. When the death is by suicide, it is especially important to remember we can’t control the behavior of another person.

Reality of death:

“It’s true.” “It really happened.” This is a frightening time. We feel that we are getting worse. Often this happens after people who have been so helpful have left. It seems as if we are going backwards. Actually, this reality has to “hit”. The best advice is to “lean into the pain”. As much as we don’t want to hurt, we must.

Anger:

Anger may be directed at ourselves and others (including family members, doctors, nurses, the person who died and even God). We may experience a general irritability. We may feel angry towards people who push us into accepting our loss too soon, or who pretend that nothing has happened. Anger is normal. Pushing down anger is harmful and may cause physical and emotional responses. Unacknowledged anger may be directed at innocent people and unrelated events. It will come out one way or another. It is difficult to admit being angry. Erroneously we may think, “nice people don’t get angry”. Recognize the anger. It is helpful to find ways to express our anger such as screaming, walking, swimming, aerobic classes, tennis, golf. Always get a doctor’s guidance on an exercise program. Talking about our anger also helps us to define, understand and learn how to handle it. To suppress anger can lead to a deeper than normal depression and bitterness. It is important to acknowledge our anger and to take steps to handle it.

Relief (laughter):

This phase comes and goes. Often after the reality “hits”, or after a particularly troublesome time, you may feel better and may even think that the difficult times are over. There is a sense of great relief at no longer feeling down. Appreciate the relief, the grief will return soon enough. It is helpful to recall the fun times. Wholesome fun and laughter are beneficial. To enjoy life is not being disloyal to your loved one. In fact, plan things to do and look forward to them. Having a sense of humor can be healing and helpful.

**“Those we love don’t go away,
they walk beside us every day....
unseen, unheard, but always near,
still loved, still missed,
and very dear.”**



2023 Bereavement support groups

July - December In person support groups

**2nd Wednesday of the month
6:30 – 8 p.m.**

Location:
25511 Little Mack, Suite 3B
Saint Clair Shores, MI 48081

Monthly: 7/12, 8/9, 9/13, 12/13
Fall six week series: 10/11, 10/18, 10/25, 11/1, 11/8, 11/15

**3rd Tuesday of the month
1 – 2:30 p.m.**

Location:
24445 Northwestern Highway, Suite 107
Southfield, MI 48075
The group is held in the basement.

Monthly: 7/18, 8/15, 9/19, 12/19
Fall six week series: 10/17, 10/24, 10/31, 11/7, 11/14, 11/21

**4th Friday of the month
10 – 11:30 a.m.**

Location:
17333 Federal Drive, Suite 260
Allen Park, MI 48101

Monthly: 7/28, 8/25, 9/22, 12/15
Fall six week series: 10/13, 10/20, 10/27, 11/3, 11/10, 11/17

SandCastles Children's Grief Support Program

Preregistration is required. To register call: 313.771.7005
Locations: St. Clair Shores, Livonia, Clinton Twp., Rochester, Detroit, Southfield & West Bloomfield



Registration is required for all support groups and space is limited. All participants must RSVP to attend the groups.

To register, call:
586.276.9570

Note: Six week series are a day and time commitment of six consecutive weeks.

For information regarding any of the listed support groups or bereavement services offered by Henry Ford Hospice, please call the Henry Ford Hospice bereavement team at 586.276.9570.

Henry Ford provides qualified interpreters and other aids and services for the deaf and hard of hearing at no cost.

To request assistance, call Henry Ford Bereavement Services at 586.276.9570.

If possible, please notify us three days in advance of the event.