

TRANSITIONS

A HOSPICE BEREAVEMENT NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends of Hospice:

When your loved one died, you probably expected to feel sad and, therefore, were able to accept your sadness as “normal.” What you may not have been aware of was how many other feelings/emotions are also a part of the grief process.

Although individuals respond to loss in many ways, there are similar characteristics felt by everyone. Some of what you are feeling may seem strange and frightening. Even though you may not be able to name the feelings you are experiencing, they belong to you, and all of them are okay.

Our feelings come from deep inside, and we cannot control them when they arise in us. We can, however, choose what to do with these feelings. We can accept them or reject them. To deny or run away from feelings is not healthy and simply prolongs grief.

Recovery is a matter of the heart, rather than the head. You are not going to think your way through grief as much as you are going to feel your way out of it. Neither are you going to bargain or manipulate yourself out of your pain. You must work with your feelings.

If you allow yourself the right to feel, you are also giving yourself permission to heal.

This month’s newsletter will address the normal feelings which can be a part of your grief experience.

Sincerely,

The Bereavement Team

Tabitha Hospice, A Collaboration with Immanuel

PERSPECTIVES ON LOSS & GRIEF ISSUE 2

- › What Feelings Are Normal?
- › What Can I Do With These Feelings?
- › Sleep Disturbances
- › Grief is Like the Wind
- › Other Resources

Words of *Wisdom*

“There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than 10,000 tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.”

Washington Irving



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: A Memoir of Grief

OTHER RESOURCES

For additional support, please contact our Hospice Bereavement Team at 402.819.4949.

For additional reading materials, please contact The Centering Corporation at 866.218.0101 or www.centering.org



TABITHA
Hospice

A COLLABORATION
WITH
 Immanuel

WHAT FEELINGS ARE NORMAL?

Shock/Numbness/Disbelief

During the early days and weeks, you may find yourself feeling that “this can’t be” and expecting to awaken from a bad dream. Your numb body manages the daily tasks, but it feels like you are walking through a fog.

Sadness/Sorrow

Sadness is an emotion you may now seem to carry constantly as you go about your daily living. It feels as if it has no beginning or end. This feeling is often described as a sense of emptiness. You may feel as though you will never be happy again. If you feel like crying, by all means cry. Do it as often as you need to, and don’t worry about crying in front of others. Constantly holding in the tears may lead to psychological or physical problems. Crying releases pent-up emotion.

Anxiety/Fear

You may find you are anxious or afraid about things that never affected you before. Some people feel like they are going crazy; others are afraid they won’t make it through this suffering. You may be worried about your future—worried that you or someone else close to you may also die—or how others will view the way you are grieving. Anxiety is normal, but if it seems intolerable, you need to do something about it. Talking about your feelings, staying busy and exercising may help release the “panicky” feeling. Good nutrition and rest are vital.

Anger

You may find yourself getting angry more easily than normal. If you are angry, you may have good reason to be. Your life seems out of control. You may feel cheated because your loved one has been taken away. Some people are angry at those around them, at the disease, at God, or even at the person who died. Anger is normal, and to suppress it can lead to deep depression. Find ways to express anger, such as walking, tennis, golf or hitting your pillow.

Guilt/Regret

Many people are tortured by the “if onlys” and “what ifs.” This guilt may be about what you did

or did not do—said or did not say—when your loved one was alive. Caring for a sick person can be a very demanding, exhausting job, and many fine people have lost their tempers and said things they ordinarily would not have. Guilt can also be the result of unfinished business with the deceased. Exploring regrets is healthy, and you can learn from it. Talk about the guilt until you can let it go. Hopefully, in time, you will realize you did the best you could under the circumstances.

Helplessness/Hopelessness

The dreams you had for your future may seem to have disappeared, and there is nothing you can do about it. Everything seems too overwhelming for you to cope.

Resentment/Jealousy

Do you look around and see others who still have their loved ones? They aren’t suffering the way you are. Life can seem totally unfair, and being resentful or jealous is natural.

Relief

When a loved one has died after a lengthy illness, a sense of relief is often experienced. Many survivors are relieved that the suffering of their loved one is over. It can also be a personal relief because the added stress to your own life is over. Along with this relief, however, can come guilt for feeling relieved. Try to remember relief is normal and is okay.

Depression

You may be thinking, “Nothing will ever be right again” or “What’s the meaning of life for me now?” You are confronted with the fact that you need to restructure your life without the presence of a very special person. These thoughts are natural, real and honest. Depression can have many components, such as tension, insomnia and feelings of worthlessness. Because you are using all your emotional energy to grieve, you may even be confused. The weariness due to grief may affect thinking and concentration.

WHAT CAN I DO WITH THESE FEELINGS?

▶ Remember that feelings are neither right nor wrong, good nor bad. Feelings are simply feelings. It is important to accept your feelings, permit them to surface and reflect on them. They can then be dealt with productively.

Putting your feelings into words can be helpful. Find a friend, family member or co-worker with whom you can share your true thoughts and feelings. Find someone who is willing to listen and who will not judge or censor you.

You can also get your words and feelings out by writing. By journaling, you can put your feelings on paper and monitor your progress at the same time. You might prefer to write letters to a friend or even to the person who died and describe what is happening in your life. Some people write poetry, draw or paint. Deal with your feelings in a way that is best for you.

The feelings of grief are like being on a roller coaster ride. You have some good days and some bad ones. At times, you may have many emotions all bombarding you at the same time. Please understand that you are not alone in your feelings. They are a natural part of the grief process. They are a sign that you are human and that you loved someone very deeply. Your feelings are very important. Treat them that way. Be gentle with yourself.

SLEEP DISTURBANCES

After the death of a loved one, many people struggle with sleep disturbances. If you were the primary caregiver of someone with a lingering illness, you may have been up and down during the night meeting the needs of your loved one. This habit of being awake frequently during the night could be the reason for your sleep difficulty. It could also be the stress of grieving. Some people are unable to get to sleep at night; others wake up frequently during the night and can’t get back to sleep. Some of the following ideas may be helpful to you:

- › Take a warm bath or listen to soothing music before going to bed.
- › Avoid high anxiety reading or television programs just before bedtime.
- › Have a healthy snack high in carbohydrates about 90 minutes before bedtime.
- › Avoid too much caffeine, even early in the day. Caffeine products include chocolate and tea, as well as coffee. Drink more water and juice.
- › Read some meditations before going to bed.
- › Exercise on a regular basis—a walk or stretching exercises tend to relax tight muscles.
- › Write down thoughts that are going through your mind. “Talk” to your journal as you would a good friend.
- › Take the dog or a stuffed animal to bed with you.

If your sleeping problems continue, consult your physician. The short-term use of a mild medication may be effective.