

# Grieving...



...is as *natural* as crying when you are hurt, sleeping when you are tired, eating when you are hungry or sneezing when your nose itches. It is *nature's way of healing a broken heart.*"

— DOUG MANNING

## OUR MISSION

Our hospices provide palliative and end-of-life care, caregiver support, and bereavement services throughout Northern Ohio.

In celebration of the individual worth of each life, we strive to relieve suffering, enhance comfort, promote quality of life, foster choice in end-of-life care, and support effective grieving.

We at Hospice of the Western Reserve and Stein Hospice care about you and want to stay in touch during the coming year.

Throughout the year, our Grief Services team offers several ways to assist you and others in your family while you move through the grieving process. Some of our services include:

- Quarterly newsletter, About Grief
- In-person and virtual grief support groups
- Educational programs on grief and loss
- Telephone support
- Supportive in-person visits
- Camps and events for children and teens

Remember that grief takes time. Be gentle with yourself and know that you are not alone. We are here with continued care and support.

If you are struggling with a particular grief issue or would just like to talk with someone on the Grief Services team, please contact us at **216.486.6838** or **[thebereavementcenter@hospicewr.org](mailto:thebereavementcenter@hospicewr.org)**.

# Common Grief Reactions

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## **Physical Reactions**

- Tightness in the throat
- Heaviness or pressure in the chest
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increased heart rate and/or sweaty palms
- Difficulty eating (or in some cases overeating)
- Headaches
- Stomach pain and/or digestive upset
- Difficulty concentrating

## **Emotional/Social Reactions**

- Sadness or depression
- Guilt or anger about your relationship with the deceased
- Anger toward God
- Unexpected or uncontrollable crying
- Mood swings
- Fear of being alone
- A sense of emptiness
- Discomfort in large crowds
- Fear of the future
- Desire to run away or become very busy
- Forgetfulness

*Please note that this is a partial list.  
Many additional reactions are not listed here.*

# Grief Reminders

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1. Grief is a normal and necessary process associated with any loss.
2. Grief involves physical as well as emotional responses.
3. Grief is hard work; it takes a lot of energy.
4. Allow yourself to fully experience your feelings.
5. Share your feelings with a trusted friend or professional.
6. Suggestions come from many sources; trust yourself to do what is right for you.
7. Have realistic expectations of yourself.
8. Deal with one hour, one day at a time. The whole situation can be overwhelming if looked at all at once.
9. Grief work may require doing things that are hard to do, such as going places you used to go together or listening to favorite songs.
10. You do not get over grief in the sense of forgetting; rather, grief will lessen and soften with time.
11. Seek help from appropriate resources such as groups, organizations and reading material related to grief.
12. See a professional counselor if that seems helpful.

*"However long the night,  
the dawn will break!"*

—AFRICAN PROVERB

## *Suggestions to Promote Physical Relief and Healing*

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- Schedule a check-up with your family physician.
- In the early stages of grief, don't force yourself to eat more than you want. As your appetite returns, eat a healthy well-balanced diet.
- Get some exercise – even a peaceful, quiet walk. Physical exercise helps to relax you.
- It may be helpful to give up caffeine (coffee, colas, tea, etc.) as a way to relieve nervousness. Be aware that alcohol is a depressant. Some findings indicate that alcohol interrupts normal sleep patterns.
- Check frequently that you have balance in your life: rest, recreation, prayer/meditation and work.

## *Suggestions to Promote Emotional Relief and Healing*

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- Be gentle with yourself. Although you may often feel overwhelmed, remind yourself that what you are going through is normal.
- Reach out to others. It is important to find friends with whom you can talk. Sharing with someone who has “been there” can be especially helpful.
- You may or may not cry often but, when you do, realize it is therapeutic. Don't fight the tears.

- Tell and re-tell what happened, remembering things about your loved one and the experience of his or her death. Good memories are also very important.
- Be aware that people grieve in different ways. Don't measure your progress in handling grief against others.
- Record and express your feelings in a personal journal. Journals reflect experiences, give support and provide a safe place to convey yourself.
- Confront guilt by realizing you did the best you could.
- Be familiar with the normal experiences of grieving and be willing to engage in your own grief work.
- Remember that grieving takes time, and that experiences and emotions can recur. Be patient with yourself, and allow yourself to heal at your own pace.
- Beware of criticizing yourself, either consciously or unconsciously, due to unrealistic expectations.
- Find support from both inside and outside your family. Don't expect your family to meet all of your needs. Remember they too are grieving.
- Many of us have been brought up to be independent: "I'm going to handle this on my own." We find it difficult to ask for help. Yet, we all need support. Take the risk of joining a support group. Asking for help from "caring people" can make a big difference in working through your grief.
- It may be time to struggle with new life patterns. In the past you may have handled grief by overactivity. If your previous style of grieving has not been helpful, try new approaches such as: becoming active in a support group; finding telephone friends; reading and learning about grief; developing new coping skills; reaching out and helping others.
- Hold on to hope!

# Surviving Grief

## Tips for Adolescents

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*You may experience all kinds of emotions. They may be overwhelming, frightening, and intense: you may feel out of control. When you are grieving, normal is messy.*

### How do you cope?

- **Shock, disbelief:** Talk, talk, talk. Grief needs to become real before you can go on with the mourning process. Avoiding the pain is not possible.
- **Denial:** Understand that you cannot escape from grief. So talk about your pain.
- **Anger:** You have every right to be angry. But you don't have a right to take out that anger on others - or on yourself. If you are feeling angry, try shooting hoops, walking, listening to music, journaling.
- **Guilt and regrets:** If only I hadn't said... I wish I had... Give yourself a break. When someone dies we often second-guess ourselves, but the truth is that awful things happen and there is little we can do about that.

- **Fears, worries:** It's difficult not to worry that something will happen to someone else you love or to you. Try to identify what your worries are. Then, talk to someone about those worries. Is anything in your control? If so, take a responsible action. If not, try some relaxation.
- **Inability to sleep:** Rest, rest, rest. Grief is draining.
- **Inability to eat:** Watch yourself. Grief can sometimes make you “forget” to eat or not care about what you are eating. Try to sit down at mealtime and eat.
- **Inability to remember:** You forgot about the paper that's due? You locked your keys in the car? Write things down. Organize for the next day the night before. Have friends call with reminders about assignments.
- **Inability to concentrate:** How can you focus when your mind is wandering? Allow more time to do homework. Talk to your teachers. **Be extra careful** when doing any task that requires your complete attention, ESPECIALLY driving.

# Suggested Reading

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**Chester Raccoon and the Acorn Full of Memories**

Audrey Penn

**Coloring your Grief –**

**Coloring to Soothe the Soul and Mend the Heart**

Jane Vair Bissler, PhD, Sheri L Goldstrom, PhD and Physllis Kosminsky, PhD

**Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins: For Teenagers Experiencing a Loss**

Enid Samuel-Traisman

**Grieving the Death of a Mother**

Harold Ivan Smith

**Healing your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas**

Alan Wolfelt

**Healing Power of Grief: The Journey Through Loss to Life and Laughter**

Gloria Lintermans and Marilyn Stolzman, PhD, LMFT

**Healing a Spouse's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas**

Alsan Wolfelt

**How to go on Living When Someone you Love Dies**

Therese A. Rando

**How to Survive the Loss of a Parent: A Guide for Adults**

Lois F. Akner

**It's OK that You're not Ok – Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture  
That Doesn't Understand**

Megan Devine

**On Grief: The Death of a Father**

Harold Ivan Smith

**The Orphaned Adult: Understanding and Coping with Grief and  
Change After the Death of Our Parents**

Alexander Levy

**Surviving the Death of a Sibling – Living Through Grief When  
an Adult Brother or Sister Dies**

T.J. Wray

**Swallowed by a Snake: The Gift of the Masculine Side of Healing**

Thomas R. Golden

**A Time to Grieve: Meditations for Healing after the Death  
of a Loved One**

Carol Staudacher

**Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essentials Touchstones for  
Finding Hope and Healing in Your Heart**

Alan D. Wolfelt

**When your Spouse Dies: A concise and Practical Source of Help  
and Advice**

Cathleen L. Curry

**Widow to Widow**

Genevieve David Ginsburg, MS

 *Online Resources*

No matter the time of day or night, you can find additional resources, comprehensive reading lists and websites, grief information and comforting readings by visiting [www.hospicewr.org/grief](http://www.hospicewr.org/grief)



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