

Normal Grief Reactions

Grief is a natural human response to loss. It is often thought of as something that will get a little bit better each day, a period of sadness that must be bravely endured until it lessens with time. But the truth is that grief is an "up and down" process that is much more than sadness. When someone important to us dies, it affects every aspect of our being – physical, mental, behavioral, and spiritual as well as emotional. Grief can cause profound changes in all these areas, and can make you feel like something is wrong with you. But in fact, something is *right* with you: these reactions are normal, natural responses to the loss of a significant person in your life.

Emotional

- Sadness
- Anger
- Guilt, regret
- Relief
- Shock, numbness
- Yearning
- Anxiety, insecurity, panic, fear
- Apathy, lack of motivation
- Loneliness and sense of social isolation
- Resentment, envy, feeling cheated
- Abandonment
- Helplessness, lack of control
- Decreased self-confidence
- Humor

Physical

- Fatigue
- Feeling of emptiness or "butterflies" in the stomach
- Lump in the throat
- Tightness in the chest, breathlessness
- Increased muscle tension, aches, pain
- Susceptibility to illness or exacerbation of existing health problems
- Feeling of weakness
- Palpitations
- Shaking
- Dryness of the mouth
- Over-sensitivity to noise

Mental

- Confusion, disorientation, forgetfulness, inability to concentrate
- Vivid imagery of the illness and/or death
- Need to tell the details of the loss again and again
- Disbelief, unreality
- Sense of presence
- Seeing, smelling, or hearing the person
- Wishing for death or to join the deceased
- Thoughts like: "It will never be the same" or "It's not fair"
- Dreams of the deceased

Behavioral

- Sleep and appetite changes
- Increase in accidents or risky behaviors
- Searching and calling out, talking to the deceased
- Crying, screaming
- Restlessness, sighing
- Irritability, feeling "on edge"
- Social withdrawal or increased social activity; changed relationships
- Changes in work performance
- Increase or decrease in alcohol or drug use
- Increase or decrease in self-care

Spiritual

- Loss of identity, loss of purpose
- Search for meaning, questioning
- Redefining personal philosophy and assumptions about life
- Turning away from or towards existing beliefs
- Increase or decrease in religious practice: attending worship, prayer, meditation
- Anger at faith, anger at God
- Gratitude
- Peace, resolution
- Increased meaning, hope
- New life priorities

We all grieve, but no two people grieve alike. You may experience any combination of these reactions, and your responses can vary greatly from day to day. Letting yourself experience and work through them is part of the difficult but ultimately healing process of grief.

List adapted from Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy by J. William Worden and "Normal Manifestations of Grief" by Gerry Haynes and Kay Kukowski

The Mourner's Bill of Rights

*As a bereaved person, you have certain rights that others must not take away from you.
In fact, it is the very upholding of these rights that makes healing possible.*

- 1. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPERIENCE YOUR OWN UNIQUE GRIEF.**
No one else will grieve in exactly the same way you do. Don't allow others to tell you what you should or should not be feeling.
- 2. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO TALK ABOUT YOUR GRIEF.**
Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk as much as you want, as often as you want, about your grief.
- 3. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO FEEL A MULTITUDE OF EMOTIONS.**
Confusion, disorientation, fear, guilt, and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief journey. Know that there is no such thing as a "wrong" emotion. Accept all your feelings and find listeners who will do the same.
- 4. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE TOLERANT OF YOUR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL LIMITS.**
Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you feeling fatigued. Respect what your body and mind is telling you. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. And don't allow others to push you into doing things you don't feel ready to do.
- 5. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPERIENCE GRIEF "ATTACKS".**
Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This can be frightening, but is normal and natural.
- 6. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE USE OF RITUAL.**
The funeral ritual provides you with the support of caring people. More important, it supportively sees you off on your painful but necessary grief journey. Later rituals, such as lighting a candle for the person who died, can also be healing touchstones.
- 7. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO EMBRACE YOUR SPIRITUALITY.**
If faith is a part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your spiritual beliefs. If you feel angry with God, find someone to talk with who will be able to listen to you without judgment.
- 8. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SEARCH FOR MEANING.**
You may find yourself asking, "Why did he or she die? Why this way? Why now?" Some of your questions may have answers, but some may not. Watch out for the cliched responses that some people may give you. Comments like, "It was God's will" or "Think of what you have to be thankful for" can be hurtful.
- 9. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO TREASURE YOUR MEMORIES.**
Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring your memories, find creative ways to embrace them.
- 10. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO MOVE TOWARD YOUR GRIEF AND HEAL.**
Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself and avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you. The death of someone significant in your life changes your life forever.

Adapted from Alan Wolfelt, PhD.

Along The Journey of Grief

You can expect that:

- Your grief may take longer than most people think.
- Your grief may take more energy than you would have ever imagined.
- Your grief may involve many changes and be continually developing.
- Your grief may show itself in all spheres of your life: psychological, social, physical, and spiritual.
- The intensity of your grief may depend on how you perceive the loss.
- You may grieve for many things both symbolic and tangible, not just the death alone. You may grieve for what you have lost already and for what you have lost in the future as well.
- Your grief may entail mourning, not only for the actual person that you have lost, but also for all the hopes, dreams and unfulfilled expectation that you held for and with that person, and for the needs that will go unmet because of their death.
- Your grief may involve a wide variety of feelings and reactions, not just those normally associated with grieving, such as depression and sadness.
- The loss may resurrect old issues, feelings, and unresolved conflicts from the past.
- You may have some identity confusion as a result of this major loss and such feelings may be a new and puzzling experience for you.
- You may have a combination of anger and depression, including feelings of irritability, frustration, annoyance or intolerance.
- You may feel some anger and guilty, and may spend a significant amount of time searching for ways that you could have changed or prevented the death.
- You may have a lack of self-concern.
- You may experience grief spasms, acute upsurges of grief that occur suddenly with no warning.
- You may have trouble thinking (memory, organization and intellectual processing) and making decisions;
- You may feel as though you are going “crazy”.
- You may be obsessed with the death and preoccupied with the deceased.

- You may begin to search for meaning and may question your religion and/or philosophy of life;
- You may find yourself acting socially in ways that are different from before.
- You may find yourself having a number of physical reactions.
- Society may have unrealistic expectations about your mourning and may respond inappropriately to you.
- You may find that there are certain dates, events, and stimuli that bring upsurges in your grief feelings. Certain experiences later in life may resurrect intense grief for you temporarily.
- In summary, your grief will bring with it, depending upon the combination of factors above, an intense amount of emotion that will surprise you and those around you.
- Our expectations tend to be too unrealistic, and more often than not, we receive insufficient assistance from friends and society. Your grief may not only be more intense than you expected, but it may also show up in more areas and ways than you ever anticipated.
- Your grief will be very idiosyncratic and dependent upon the meaning of your loss, your own personal characteristics, the type of death, your social support, and your physical state.

Helping Yourself Through Grief

By Helen Fitzgerald, CDE

Training Director, American Hospice Foundation

Grief is experienced whenever you lose something important to you. Grief is so powerful that people sometimes look for ways to go around it rather than experience it. This approach will not work. The best thing you can do for yourself is to work through grief and express your feelings. The following are specific ways to help you work through grief.

BASIC HEALTH CONCERNS - Grief is exhausting and it is important to continue your daily health routines.

1. Try to eat regular, nourishing meals. If it is too difficult to eat three regular meals, try 4 or 5 small ones. Have nourishing food available to nibble on rather than chips and candy.
2. Rest is important. Try to develop regular bedtime routines. If you are having a hard time getting to sleep, try a glass of warm milk or some soft easy listening music to sooth your thoughts.
3. Continue your exercise program and develop a manageable routine.
4. Meditation, perhaps in the form of prayer or yoga, can help you get the rest you need.
5. Make sure your family doctor knows what has happened so he or she can help monitor your health.

OUTSIDE SUPPORT - Grief does not have to be as isolating as it seems.

1. Look for a support group, lecture or seminar that pertains to your situation.
2. Continue attending church services and stay in contact with this "family", if that has been a source of support to you.
3. Let your friends and other family members know what your emotional or physical needs are. The more they know what to do to help you, the more available they will be.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

1. If you desire some alone time, take it as often as you need to.
2. Give yourself rewards along the way as something to look forward to.
3. Look for small ways to pamper you, such as bubble baths, new cologne, soft pajamas, or a new haircut.
4. A short trip can be a good break from grief, but be aware that upon your return, the pain of grief will be waiting for you. However, you will have had a rest and the knowledge that you can enjoy some things in life again.
5. Look for some new interests, perhaps a new hobby or resuming an old one.
6. Carry a special letter, poem, or quote with you to read when the going gets tough.
7. Try to enjoy the good days and don't feel guilty for doing so.
8. Reach out to help someone else.
9. Learn to have patience with yourself. Remember, grief takes time.
10. Know that you WILL get better and there WILL be a time when you can look forward to getting up in the morning and be glad you are alive.

HELP FOR YOUR MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

1. Good communication is necessary. People cannot read your mind. They may not know that this particular day is difficult or they may not know how to help you.
2. Talk about what is helpful to you and what is not helpful to you.
3. Be sensitive to the needs of your partner. Grief is different for each person.
4. By reviewing past losses together, you can understand how your partner may react to the recent one.
5. Avoid competition in who is hurting most. Each person will have difficult issues to cope with. Grief is hard for everybody.
6. Consult each other regarding birthdays, holidays, and anniversaries. It is a mistake to hope the holiday will slip by unnoticed. Make plans and discuss them.
7. Try not to expect too much from your partner. People do not operate at 100 percent during the grieving period. The dishes may not get done or the yard may not be mown as regularly as before. Many chores can wait. Hire someone to help you catch up.
8. Read and educate yourself about the grief process. Go to the library and get an armload of books. Read ones in which you feel the author "is speaking to you" and return the others. Grief books do not need to be read cover to cover. Look for a book with a detailed table of contents that will enable you to select certain parts, as you need them.
9. Consider the "gender" differences. Men and women grieve differently. Usually women are more comfortable expressing their emotions. Men often get busy, burying themselves at work or taking on projects at home.
10. Avoid pressuring your partner about decisions that can wait. Of course, some decisions cannot be postponed, and those you will have to deal with. However, many can be put off for a day or a week or even longer.
11. Take a short trip to "re-group." If a child has died, it is very important to re-acquaint yourself with the new family structure. Getting away from the telephone and memories for a few days can help you do this.
12. Seek professional guidance, especially if you feel your loss is interfering with your marriage or relationships.

FEELINGS

1. Read books or articles of the process of grief so you can identify what you are feeling and have some ideas on how to help yourself.
2. Allow your feelings to be expressed appropriately.
3. Crying is good. You feel lighter after you have had a good cry. Consider sharing your tears with other loved ones. We laugh together; why not cry together as well.
4. Find friends or family members to share your feelings with.
5. Be careful not to use alcohol, drugs, or tranquilizers. These will only mask the pain and could lead to problems.
6. Keeping a journal is a good way to identify feelings and also to see progress.
7. Holidays and anniversaries need special planning. They are impossible to ignore. Look for a workshop on dealing with the holidays and make plans with your family and friends.

The Journey Through Grief: The Mourner's Six "Reconciliation Needs"

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

The death of someone loved changes our lives forever. And the movement from the "before" to the "after" is almost always a long, painful journey. From my own experiences with loss as well as those of the thousands of grieving people I have worked with over the years, I have learned that if we are to heal we cannot skirt the outside edges of our grief. Instead, we must journey all through it, sometimes meandering the side roads, sometimes plowing directly into its raw center. I have also learned that the journey requires mourning. There is an important difference, you see. Grief is what you think and feel on the inside after someone you love dies. Mourning is the outward expression of those thoughts and feelings. To mourn is to be an active participant in our grief journeys. We all grieve when someone we love dies, but if we are to heal, we must also mourn. There are six "yield signs" you are likely to encounter on your journey through grief-what I call the "reconciliation needs of mourning." For while your grief journey will be an intensely personal, unique experience, all mourners must yield to this set of basic human needs if they are to heal.

Need 1. Acknowledging the reality of the death.

This first need of mourning involves gently confronting the reality that someone you care about will never physically come back into your life again.

Whether the death was sudden or anticipated, acknowledging the full reality of the loss may occur over weeks and months. To survive, you may try to push away the reality of the death at times. You may discover yourself replaying events surrounding the death and confronting memories, both good and bad. This replay is a vital part of this need of mourning. It's as if each time you talk it out, the event is a little more real.

Remember-this first need of mourning, like the other five that follow, may intermittently require your attention for months. Be patient and compassionate with yourself as you work on each of them.

Need 2. ^{Allowing} Embracing the pain of the loss.

This need of mourning requires us to embrace the pain of our loss-something we naturally don't want to do. It is easier to avoid, repress or deny the pain of grief than it is to confront it, yet it is in confronting our pain that we learn to reconcile ourselves to it.

You will probably discover that you need to "dose" yourself in embracing your pain. In other words, you cannot (nor should you try to) overload yourself with the hurt all at one time. Sometimes you may need to distract yourself from the pain of death, while at other times you will need to create a safe place to move toward it.

Unfortunately, our culture tends to encourage the denial of pain. If you openly express your feelings of grief, misinformed friends may advise you to "carry on" or "keep your chin up." If, on the other hand, you remain "strong" and "in control," you may be congratulated for "doing well" with your grief. Actually, doing well with your grief means becoming well acquainted with your pain.

Need 3. Remembering the person who died.

Do you have any kind of relationship with someone when they die? Of course. You have a relationship of memory. Precious memories, dreams reflecting the significance of the relationship and objects that link you to the person who died (such as photos, souvenirs etc.) are examples of some of the things that give testimony to a different form of a continued relationship. This need of mourning involves allowing and encouraging yourself to pursue this relationship.

But some people may try to take your memories away. Trying to be helpful, they encourage you to take down all the photos of the person who died. They tell you to keep busy or even to move out of your house. But in my experience, remembering the past makes hoping for the future possible. Your future will become open to new experiences only to the extent that you embrace the past.

Need 4. Developing a new self-identity.

Part of your self-identity comes from the relationships you have with other people. When someone with whom you have a relationship dies, your self-identity, or the way you see yourself, naturally changes.

You may have gone from being a "wife" or "husband" to a "widow" or "widower." You may have gone from being a "parent" to a "bereaved parent." The way you define yourself and the way society defines you is changed.

A death often requires you to take on new roles that had been filled by the person who died. After all, someone still has to take out the garbage, someone still has to buy the groceries. You confront your changed identity every time you do something that used to be done by the person who died. This can be very hard work and can leave you feeling very drained.

You may occasionally feel child-like as you struggle with your changing identity. You may feel a temporarily heightened dependence on others as well as feelings of helplessness, frustration, inadequacy and fear. Many people discover that as they work on this need, they ultimately discover some positive aspects of their changed self-identity. You may develop a renewed confidence in yourself, for example. You may develop a more caring, kind and sensitive part of yourself. You may develop an assertive part of your identity that empowers you to go on living even though you continue to feel a sense of loss.

Need 5. Searching for meaning.

When someone you love dies, you naturally question the meaning and purpose of life. You probably will question your philosophy of life and explore religious and spiritual values as you work on this need. You may discover yourself searching for meaning in your continued living as you ask "How?" and "Why" questions. "How could God let this happen?" "Why did this happen now, in this way?" The death reminds you of your lack of control. It can leave you feeling powerless.

The person who died was a part of you. This death means you mourn a loss not only outside of yourself, but inside of yourself as well. At times, overwhelming sadness and loneliness may be your constant companions. You may feel that when this person died, part of you died with him or her. And now you are faced with finding some meaning in going on with your life even though you may often feel so empty.

This death also calls for you to confront your own spirituality. You may doubt your faith and have spiritual conflicts and questions racing through your head and heart. This is normal and part of your journey toward renewed living.

Need 6. Receiving ongoing support from others.

The quality and quantity of understanding support you get during your grief journey will have a major influence on your capacity to heal. You cannot-nor should you try to-do this alone. Drawing on the experiences and encouragement of friends, fellow mourners or professional counselors is not a weakness but a healthy human need. And because mourning is a process that takes place over time, this support must be available months and even years after the death of someone in your life.

Unfortunately, because our society places so much value on the ability to "carry on," "keep your chin up" and "keep busy," many mourners are abandoned shortly after the event of the death. "It's over and done with" and "It's time to get on with your life" are the types of messages directed at mourners that still dominate. Obviously, these messages encourage you to deny or repress your grief rather than express it.

To be truly helpful, the people in your support system must appreciate the impact this death has had on you. They must understand that in order to heal, you must be allowed-even encouraged-to mourn long after the death. And they must encourage you to see mourning not as an enemy to be vanquished but as a necessity to be experienced as a result of having loved.

Reconciling your grief

You may have heard-indeed you may believe-that your grief journey's end will come when you resolve, or recover from, your grief. But your journey will never end. People do not "get over" grief.

Reconciliation is a term I find more appropriate for what occurs as the mourner works to integrate the new reality of moving forward in life without the physical presence of the person who died. With reconciliation comes a renewed sense of energy and confidence, an ability to fully acknowledge the reality of the death and a capacity to become reinvolved in the activities of living. In reconciliation, the sharp, ever-present pain of grief gives rise to a renewed sense of meaning and purpose. Your feeling of loss will not completely disappear, yet they will soften, and the intense pangs of grief will become less frequent. Hope for a continued life will emerge as you are able to make commitments to the future, realizing that the person who died will never be forgotten, yet knowing that your life can and will move forward.

About the Author

Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt is a noted author, educator and grief counselor. He serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado For more information, write or call The Center for Loss and Life Transition, 3735 Broken Bow Road, Fort Collins, Colorado 80526, (970) 226-6050.



Books for Adults

General Grief

Bozarth-Campbell, Alla	<u><i>Life is Goodbye, Life is Hello</i></u>
Fitzgerald, Helen	<u><i>The Mourning Handbook</i></u>
James, John W. & Frank Cherry	<u><i>The Grief Recovery Handbook</i></u>
Kalish, Richard	<u><i>Death, Grief, and Caring Relationships</i></u>
Kushner, Harold	<u><i>When Bad Things Happen to Good People</i></u>
Manning, Doug	<u><i>Don't Take My Grief Away</i></u>
Rando, Therese A.	<u><i>Grieving: How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies</i></u>
Rich, Phil.	<u><i>The Healing Journey through Grief, Your Journal for Reflection and Recovery</i></u>
Sanders, Catherine M.	<u><i>Surviving Grief.....and Learning to Live Again</i></u>
Staudacher, Carol	<u><i>Men and Grief: A Guide for Men Surviving the Death of a Loved One</i></u> <u><i>Anguish of Grief</i></u> <u><i>A Time to Grieve</i></u>

Death of a Life Partner

Brothers, Joyce	<u><i>Widowed</i></u>
Ericsson, Stephanie	<u><i>Companion Through the Darkness: Inner Dialogues on Grief</i></u>
Ginsburg, Genevieve	<u><i>Widow to Widow</i></u>
L'Engle, Madeleine	<u><i>Two-Part Invention</i></u>
Lewis, C. S.	<u><i>A Grief Observed</i></u>
Rose, Xenia	<u><i>Widow's Journey: A Return to the Loving Self</i></u>
Grollman, Earl	<u><i>What Helped Me When My Loved One Died</i></u>
Tatelbaum, Judy	<u><i>The Courage to Grieve</i></u>
Westberg, Granger	<u><i>Good Grief</i></u>

Death of a Parent

Akner, Lois F.	<u><i>Surviving the Loss of a Parent</i></u>
Brooks, Jane	<u><i>Midlife Orphan</i></u>
Edelman, Hope	<u><i>Motherless Daughters</i></u>
Kennedy, Alexandra	<u><i>Losing a Parent</i></u>
Myers, Edward	<u><i>When Parents Die</i></u>

Books for Children

Alexander, Sue	<u><i>Nadia the Willful</i></u>
Buscaglia, Leo	<u><i>The Fall of Freddie the Leaf</i></u>
Clifton, Lucille	<u><i>Everett Anderson's Goodbye</i></u>
Cohn, Janice	<u><i>I Had A Friend Named Peter</i></u>
dePaola, Tomi	<u><i>Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs</i></u>
Krementz, Jill	<u><i>How It Feels When a Parent Dies</i></u>
Kroll, Virginia	<u><i>Fireflies, Peachpies and Lullabies</i></u>
Mellonie & Ingpen	<u><i>Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children</i></u>
O'Toole, Donna	<u><i>Aarvy Aardvark Finds Hope</i></u>
Powell, Sandy	<u><i>Geranium Morning</i></u>
Shriver, Maria	<u><i>What's Heaven?</i></u>
Tiffault, Benette	<u><i>A Quilt for Elizabeth</i></u>
Varley, Susan	<u><i>Badger's Parting Gifts</i></u>
Viorst, Judith	<u><i>The Tenth Good Thing About Barney</i></u>



Formerly Horizons Grief Center

250 Hospice Circle
Raleigh, NC 27607
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www.transitionslifecare.org

Suggested Readings on Grief

Books for Adults

Death of a Life Partner

Stephanie Ericsson
Genevieve Ginsburg
C. S. Lewis
Xenia Rose

Companion Through the Darkness: Inner Dialogues on Grief
Widow to Widow
A Grief Observed
Widow's Journey: A Return to the Loving Self

Death of a Parent

Jane Brooks
Neil Chethik
Hope Edelman
Alexander Levy

Midlife Orphan
Father Loss
Motherless Daughters
The Orphaned Adult

General

Jack Cain
Earl Grollman
Martha Whitmore Hickman
Doug Manning
Therese A. Rando
Phil Rich
Judy Tattelbaum

Now: Overcoming Crushing Grief by Living in the Present
What Helped Me When My Loved One Died
Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief
Don't Take My Grief Away
Grieving: How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies
The Healing Journey Through Grief: Your Journal for Reflection & Recovery
The Courage to Grieve

Books for Children and Teens

For Children

Laurie Krasny Brown
Mellonie & Ingpen
Marge Heegaard
Patrice Karst
Trevor Romain
Pat Thomas

When Dinosaurs Die
Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children
When Someone Very Special Dies
The Invisible String
What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?
I Miss You

For Teens

Earl Grollman
Earl Hipp
Donna O'Toole

Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers
Help for the Hard Times
Facing Change: Coming Together and Falling Apart in the Teen Years

For Parents with Grieving Children

Helen Fitzgerald
P. Silverman & M. Kelly

The Grieving Child
A Parent's Guide to Raising Grieving Children



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Coping With Grief: Exploring Our Beliefs and Finding Meaning

What were your main values and beliefs about life before the death occurred?

Are there some beliefs that have been strengthened?

Are there some beliefs that have been lost or weakened?

What helps you to find meaning in the midst of your loss?

Are there ways in which you have grown from this loss?

GRIEF WHEEL

Source: Duke Hospice Bereavement Services





November 6, 2014



As you may have experienced these last several months, grief arrives with a myriad of emotions ranging from profound sadness to bewilderment to anger. Some of the emotions are expected while others take us by surprise. Anger is one of the emotions that can surprise us.

We tend to view anger as a negative or frightening emotion, when it is actually a natural, even healthy, emotion. Human beings are born with a natural instinct to express anger; it is our way of saying, "Hey, something is wrong here." Babies cry out in frustration and anger when they are wet, hungry, or hurting. Adults experience anger when someone hurts our feelings or something causes us distress. The potentially dangerous aspect of anger is not the feeling itself, but the expression of the feeling. If not expressed in a healthy manner, anger can cause harm to us as well as to other people or things.

Anger, frustration, and irritation are all natural grief reactions. You have a right to be angry; something is not right with your world. Someone important to you is no longer here with you, and you are in pain. Please allow yourself to experience any anger that may arise; it is part of your healing. We hope that the attached worksheet will help you to explore and better understand this powerful emotion.

Counseling and support group services continue to be available, and offer a safe place to explore anger and ways for expressing it in healthy ways. If we can be of support, please call us at (919)719-7199.

Warmly,
Your Bereavement Counselors

To discontinue letters, please call (919)719-7199 or email amccall@transitionslifecare.org.



Coping With Grief: Exploring Anger

Anger can range from disappointment to frustration to rage. What words best describe your anger?

Who are you angry with? What are you angry about?

Anger can hurt us by separating us from others and keeping our attention on things we cannot change. It can help us by telling us something is wrong and inspiring us to make changes. Is your anger hurting you or helping you?

You can't control what makes you angry but you *can* control how you respond to your anger. What do you want to do with your anger? What is one step you can take?

When you are feeling angry, what helps you?



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Wanting to see us happy and fulfilled again, friends and family members often encourage us to "let go and get on with life." Letting go and moving on is much easier said than done. We interpret "letting go" to mean that we need to "let go" of the person who has died, when, in reality, we may need to find a way to "let go" of some of our grief. We may be holding onto our grief believing that it is our only remaining connection to the person who has died. We may be afraid that if we give up the pain in order to "move on,"-we will lose them completely.

To overcome this fear, it is important to realize that we will never lose our connection to the person who was, and continues to be, an integral part of our life. Reflecting on her own grief, Helen Keller wrote:

*"What we have once enjoyed we can never lose.
All that we love deeply becomes a part of us."*

Our loved ones are a part of us; they taught us important lessons, shared our joys and sorrows, and influenced our lives in many ways. We take them with us as we move into the future. As Morrie Schwartz tells us in Tuesdays with Morrie: "Death ends a life, not a relationship." We hope that the attached article, written by a father who lost a son, will help you affirm your ongoing relationship with your loved one and to see your grief in a new way.

Individual counseling and support group services continue to be available to you. If you are interested in further support, please call us at (919)719-7199.

Warmly,
Your Bereavement Counselors

To discontinue letters, please call (919)719-7199 or email amccall@transitionslifecare.org.





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MY OLD FRIEND, GRIEF
Adolfo Quezada
From the Tucson, Arizona *Daily Star*

MY OLD FRIEND, GRIEF, is back. He comes to visit me once in a while just to remind me that I am still a broken person. Surely there has been much healing since my son died six years ago, and surely I have adjusted to a world without him by now. But the truth is, we never completely heal, we never totally adjust to the loss of a major love. We will be all right, but we will never be the same.

And so my old friend Grief drops in to say hello. Sometimes he enters through the door of my memory. Sometimes he sneaks up on me. I'll hear a certain song, smell a certain fragrance, or look at a certain picture, and I'll remember how it used to be. Sometimes it brings a smile to my face, sometimes a tear.

Some may say that such remembering is not healthy, that we ought not to dwell on thoughts that make us sad. Yet, the opposite is true. Grief revisited is grief acknowledged, and grief confronted is grief resolved.

But if grief is resolved, why do we still feel a deep sense of loss at anniversaries and holidays, and even when we least expect it? Why do we feel a lump in the throat, even six years after the loss? It is because healing does not mean forgetting, and because moving on with life does not mean that we don't take part of the deceased with us.

My old friend Grief doesn't get in the way of my living. He just wants to drop by and chat sometimes. In fact, Grief has taught me, over the years, that if I try to deny the reality of a major loss in my life, I end up having to deny life altogether. He has taught me that although the pain of loss is great, I must confront it and experience it fully or else risk emotional paralysis.

Old Grief has also taught me that I can survive even great losses and that although my world is very different after a major loss, it is still my world and life is worth living. He has taught me that when I am willing to be pruned by the losses that come, I can flourish again in season, not in spite of loss, but because of it.

My old friend, Grief, has taught me that the loss of a loved one does not mean the loss of love, for love is stronger than separation and longer than the permanence of death.



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February 5, 2015



Grief is a hard task master; it is also a powerful teacher. It reminds us of what is important to us and helps us grow in ways we never could have imagined. In this past year, you have faced difficult times and perhaps have been surprised to find new strengths within yourself.

As you move forward, you will continue to find courage and inspiration through loving memory of the person who died. Despite all that is lost, love remains. Grief ultimately teaches us that love is a force more powerful than death. The enclosed poem expresses that truth. Eloise Cole, a poet familiar with grief, puts it this way:

*I know that as I continue along Life's way,
The light of your love and the gift of your memory
Will be my warmth and strength.
Your gift of love will remain.*

In the past year you have begun a new and challenging journey. We are honored to have accompanied you in some small way during this time. As our *Care Notes* program ends, we know that your journey continues. If you need our support along the way, our counseling services remain available to you. You are welcome to call us at (919)719-7199.

Please know that our thoughts remain with you.

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If By Chance

*If by chance, you have a
memory of me,*

Let it be one of laughter;

*Let me leave to you
a memory of joy.*

*And if, by chance, you have a
thought of me,*

Let it be one of understanding;

*Let me leave with you
companionship in sorrow.*

*And when, by chance,
you dream of me,*

Let it be one of love;

*Let the memory of my love
be your greatest gift of all.*

Author unknown