

Bereavement news for people living with grief



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Words of Encouragement

I have learned a lot over the past 25 years of working with Hospice patients and families.

They have taught me the importance of resilience; to believe in oneself and persevere even through life's most difficult moments. I know many of you may think that the pain will never end, but let me assure you, it will lessen as you continue to walk through your grief. I am not going to lie, it is not going to be easy. This grief journey is hard and can be longer than you anticipate. Be patient with yourself, you will survive. Many individuals question, "How do I go on without my loved one?" I realize that the loss of a loved one can be both devastating and heartbreaking. It is never easy to say goodbye to someone we care about and love. I also acknowledge that even in the best of relationships there are ups and downs. Even when the relationship is toxic, unhealthy and there is freedom from the pain of the relationship the grief process may still remain complicated.

We have all heard the phrase "Time Heals All Wounds." To be honest, that is not the case. Time helps, but you will not be 100% healed, as you are forever changed by the death of your loved one. You will have your moments and you are entitled to them. It is like someone who is recovering from open heart surgery. To be discharged home, a person has to work hard doing rehabilitation exercises, eat properly, and commit to a change of lifestyle for the remainder of one's lifetime.

As a grieving individual, one must do the work to heal. There will always be a scar, for the heart patient a physical one and for the grieving individual an emotional one. It will be a constant reminder of how your life has changed. Self-Care is essential in any healing process. Grieving is about "choice". The choice to move on and do the best one can or the choice to continue to live in fear, frustration, loneliness, regret and despair. There is a time for sadness, reflection and adjustment. It is important to pace yourself when you are grieving. You are not a multi-tasker at the moment. Take one task or project at a time. Remember for now your brain is not functioning at its best. Grief is a trial and error experience. You may need to try different strategies to see what works for you. It's like putting a puzzle together and finding the right piece to fit. It doesn't happen all at once; but develops over time. The timeframe for the grief experience varies from person to person and is dependent on a whole host of things, like the attachment you had to the individual and the circumstances of your loved one's death. Remember you are your own person. Try not to compare your journey to someone else's. Your life is constantly evolving. Where you are today or even three months from now, will be totally different at the nine month mark. The most important aspect of your walk with grief is remembering and reflecting on your life with your loved one, but also realizing life must go on. You must continue to be accountable and fulfill your daily responsibilities. It's okay to have fun. Moving forward with your life doesn't mean forgetting your loved one but rather incorporating your loved one's strengths into your everyday life. You

honor your loved one's life and memory. I have met people in the lowest points in their life. I personally walk a journey of grief and sadness. To find a place of healing, redefine your new normal, yourself and your new beginning. You will find strength within yourself that you never thought you had. Believe in yourself and your abilities. You will survive too!

7 grief strategies for the new year

The old saying is true: **"If there is an elephant in the room, introduce him."**

No good purpose is served by denial, yet we are very good at it. When it comes to facing the pain of our grief with eyes open, we often turn away instead. But when we have a psychological elephant in the room of our mind, we should acknowledge him, and plan a way to shrink him down to a manageable size then get him on his way. If we've had a loss recently, the New Year provides a good opportunity for us to be honest with our grief, and be proactive in the months ahead and do the necessary grief work to begin addressing the elephant in the room.

1. Write yourself a comforting and encouraging letter.

You are worthy of being comforted and encouraged. Write yourself a letter saying the same things you would say to a good friend. Then, read the letter, put it away for a few days, then read it again. Do this for a few months and then write yourself a second letter, and so on. This is an act of self-compassion, treating yourself as gently as you would treat someone else. Feeling intense sorrow and bereavement is not a sign of weakness; to the contrary, it is a sign of deep humanity and personal capacity to love.

2. **Buy a big calendar, and use it.** One problem bereaved people face is the feeling that one day drags into the next, always the same. An 'appointment calendar' can solve some of the problems you are facing. Large calendars, like a desk calendar, give you room to write. As the New Year begins, sit down with the calendar, and start filling your days with appointments. Appointments with whom? Most importantly, with yourself. Pen in valuable "self-time." The simple act of reserving time for yourself empowers you to breathe and reflect as the New Year unfolds. Appointments like "movie with me" or "journaling with me" make it possible for you to always tell others, when asked to go somewhere or do something, "Let me check my calendar, I may have an appointment."

3. **Move your body, move your mind.** As you adjust to your life without the physical presence of your loved one who died, it's vital you get outside and move. Pick short, achievable goals, like a short hike, a walk around the block, or a yoga session before your fireplace. This will give you a sense of accomplishment, and you will derive the physical and psychological benefits of having enlisted your body in your ongoing encounter with grief.

4. **Realize that you do not need to "understand" your grief right now.** Time will help clear your mind, and you will eventually be able to address your loss, the pain it has brought you, and the changes in your life that have ensued.

5. Decide that in the New Year, you will begin to focus a bit more on others, as a part of your loved one's legacy.

We all need to get out of ourselves and focus on other people and their problems. Sometimes, this helps us gain a fresh perspective on our own life. You will no doubt talk with new people. It is valuable to begin to talk out loud-in the past tense-about your loved one. It may be shocking to hear yourself talk about them in the past tense, but it will help you integrate their death into your life.

6. **Listen to the music.** Sad people who listen to their favorite music that matches their mood report feeling better. Music is therapeutic and soothing. Throughout history, music has been central to the expression of human values and sentiments. Just get the music playing so you can listen. As you do, let your mind take you where it will, and after a while I'll bet you'll feel relaxed and even renewed.

7. **Wishing you well.** As the New Year begins, write down what your loved one would want for you in the New Year. Make a list of a few states of mind, attitudes or commodities that your loved one would want for you to attain as you move forward without him. Then, choose one of those outcomes and pursue it. Look back at your list after a few months, and check off the outlook or objective you now have. Deliberately choose to achieve something your loved one would want you to have in this New Year. By doing so, you will honor their memory.

We can be active participants in our emotional well-being. By purposefully facing our sorrow, and calmly, carefully thinking about what we can do to help integrate our sorrow into our larger life, we can contribute to forging our new identity. This is a powerful choice to make as a New Year and our new lives dawn.

Loneliness and Grief

Grief is an individual journey. Yet, there are commonalities amongst grievers and although there have been 5 stages many people concentrate on (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance), there is an additional stage that needs attention: LONELINESS. It lingers even after Acceptance has been achieved.

“Do’s” and “don’ts” of coping with loneliness

1. **Do** find support in your environment that gives your life purpose and direction (family members, pets, friends, neighbors, colleagues, athletic and/or church community, support groups or a counselor). Do tell them what you need and when you need space.

Don’t confuse companionship with completeness; a relationship following loss can be a positive and healthy step, as long as you realize a new person in your life can never replace or stand in for someone who is gone. Spending time with the “right” person who compliments you in this time in your life is necessary. You are different now and what you need is different now. New doesn’t have to be romantic, it doesn’t have to have an end in mind, and doesn’t have to mean commitment. New may mean someone with whom you have meals or enjoy activities. You can dictate the development of the relationship.

2. **Do** be busy in moderation. Busy can be good. It means you get up and getting going. It may mean exercise and fresh air. It may mean a healthy dose of distraction which is needed.

Don’t be over-busy. You need time to rest, time to reflect, and time to transition into being alone. It also means find your new normal which will need time to get acclimated to.

3. **Do** acknowledge what has been lost, but **don’t** live in a place of “What if’s”, or “If only’s”. It’s normal for our brain to take us to these places. We cannot rebuild ourselves and our life if we get trapped in the “what if’s”, or compare our lives to another bereaved individual. The goal is to acknowledge the pain of loss, but not allow it to alienate us from those around us.

4. **Do** spend time with those individuals who help you get to know yourself better. Discover who you are after loss, and define who you want to be now, as well as, who deserves to be in your life.

Don’t spend time with people who bring you down. Avoid people who drink too much, help too little, who are negative and bitter, and who seem only to bring you down with them. It is better to be alone than being with the wrong person.

5. **Do** something new, but start small. Think of something that will have a positive impact for you but also for the community as well. Be motivated by the feeling of giving back as this may move you forward. Helping those less fortunate can get you out of your own head. It could be a class or a hobby you wanted to try. Know that it doesn’t hurt to try, the only thing you risk losing is some of the loneliness you’ve been carrying for so long.

Don’t be afraid to try something new, it will require you to step outside your comfort zone. It will require energy. If you find that the cement shoes of grief are preventing your movement, it may be time to break free.





2023 bereavement support groups

Join the Henry Ford Hospice bereavement teams in virtual support groups on the following days of each month:

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

Monthly:

1/11, 2/8, 3/8, 6/14.

Spring Series:

4/12, 4/19, 4/26, 5/3, 5/10, 5/17

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

Monthly:

1/17, 2/21, 3/21, 6/20.

Spring Series:

4/18, 4/25, 5/2, 5/9, 5/16, 5/23

4th Thursday of the month **10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.**

Monthly:

1/26, 2/23, 3/23, 6/22.

Spring Series:

4/27, 5/4, 5/11, 5/18, 5/25, 6/1

SandCastles Children's Grief Support Program

Pre-registration is required. To register, please call:
313.771.7005

St. Clair Shores, Livonia, Clinton Twp., Rochester, Detroit
Southfield, and West Bloomfield

**Registration is required
for all support groups
and space is limited.**

**To register, call:
586.276.9570**

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

You will need to provide your
name, contact number, and
email address so we may
forward the invitation and
provide further instructions.

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.