

GRIEF EDUCATION AND SUPPORT MAILING PROGRAM

This newsletter is being provided by the Bereavement Department of The Kaiser Hospice Program



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Fifth in a Series of Five Newsletters

About This Newsletter...

This is the final newsletter in the series you have been receiving over the past year. We hope the ideas presented have been helpful.

Each individual's grief experience is unique, and no one can predict how long your mourning will last. We hope you are progressing and that your grieving will not be prolonged.

This newsletter includes some suggestions on "next steps" which you may find helpful. We are aware you may want more in the way of support than we have been able to offer through this program. As always, you are welcome to attend the bereavement support groups at Kaiser Permanente any time. Many resources are available in the community for private counseling and/or grief support groups, and we encourage you to utilize these resources as needed.

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With Healing Comes New Life

It has been close to a year since your loved one has died. Perhaps you are still struggling to find an inner peace - a distance that only healing can bring.

The following is a collection of thoughts and an exercise shared by people who successfully worked through their grief. As I listened to these families, I found the same healing thread responsible for restoring harmony and balance to their lives. I pass this thread on to you.

Any major injury to the physical body causes pain and suffering. A patient's total being needs time and extensive therapy in order to face life again as he or she knows it. Exercise can be painfully tedious, and the injured patient does not want to endure the discomfort even though it means the road to recovery. As treatment continues, the mind responds. Healing brings strength and wellness to the whole body. Balance is restored to their life.

Experiencing the loss of a loved one also causes intense pain and suffering as it touches every part of the body. The emotional injuries require special therapy in order for the survivor to face life again. Time, and a good support system carry the survivor through much of the grieving process. But the greatest advancement comes when the survivor alone recognizes and accepts his or her loss. With this difficult moment behind, the sadness ebbs, and the healing process begins.

Last, let me tell you about the most important thread of healing common to these families I talked with. They found peace and healing when they were able to allow their loved one to become an ongoing part of their life experience. They continued to find joy in remembering the special times they had shared together. Although this exercise was painful, with practice

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About This Newsletter...

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Our thoughts and best wishes are with you and we hope you continue to learn and grow.

If you would like to participate in an oral survey to help us evaluate this mailing program you may phone me at 641-4100.

Your input is the most important factor in helping us assess the effectiveness of this program and we welcome your comments and suggestions.

*Pat Myers, LCSW
Bereavement Coordinator*

With Healing Comes New Life

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they developed a different and meaningful relationship with their loved one. The memories fade, but never go away. The sun begins to shine. With healing comes new life.

May the healing of this peace come to you.

*Pat Pighin, volunteer
Mt. Diablo Hospital Medical Center*



“My Old Friend Grief”

Grief has taught me a few things about loving that I would not have learned on my own. He has taught me 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 pain of loss is great, I must confront it and experience it fully or risk emotional paralysis.

Old Grief has taught me that I can survive even great loss, and although my world is different, it is still my world and I must live in it. He has taught me that when I let go

Old Grief has taught me that I can survive even great loss...

I can flourish again in season and bring forth the good fruit that comes, not in spite of my 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. Love is stronger than separation and longer than the permanence of death. My old friend Grief may leave me for a while, but he will be back again to remind me to confront my new reality and to gain through loss and pain.

*Adolfo Quezada
TFC, Grand Junction, CO*

A New Beginning

In the last mailing, we began to talk about the process of “letting go.” It is hard to do, but necessary to start before your life can really continue. Do not be afraid to use the strength, wisdom, and support given from your lost loved one in the past. Remember the hard times you might have shared together. Imagine what he or she might say or do and draw from these strengths.

Now you are ready to do something nice for yourself. For some of us, that is a new approach. We have never thought of just ourselves. We have not had time to pamper ourselves, but it is okay. It helps to learn a new independence, to reassemble our strengths, and to assure a meaningful survival with purpose. It helps you feel good about you. A lost loved one would not want you to spend the rest of your life grieving. He or she would want you to grow and continue to live - really live - not just exist.

So think about beginning. What shall that first “something nice” be? A new perfume or fancy soap that you like? A new hairdo? Learning to golf? Or a fishing trip or vacation? What have you always wanted to do but your loved one did not share your wish, so you put it off? Why not do it now?! Can you afford it? Even if it is difficult, try to find a way to do it.

It does not have to be big -- start little. Maybe it will take practice. But it will feel good, and that is what is important. And you will be taking a BIG step (even though it may feel like a little one!) on the way to getting going again. And most important - You will be taking charge of you, not depending on others, doing something on your own behalf.

It works! I have tried it. It was even fun, relaxing, and it made me feel good about myself. It did help!

Try it. You may like it too.

A NEW BEGINNING!

Linda Cannon, R.N.

Building Healthy Self Esteem

If you decide you could do with a better sense of self-esteem and want to work on it, you may find some of the following suggestions helpful. These suggestions may lead you to think of other steps that would be meaningful for you.

⊕₃ Seek out, and cultivate relationships with other persons who are “good for you” in terms of self-esteem; i.e., people who believe in you, affirm you, are open and honest with you, and are the kind who can help you grow. Look for people who are “givers” as well as “receivers.” Some people are mostly “takers” and tend to drain those they relate to. You deserve the kind of relationships where there is a good balance between giving and receiving. (Watch out for those who try to do too much for you -- they are really not helping you in the long run!)

⊕₃ Learn to “cease and desist” from thinking and speaking in ways that put yourself down. A sure sign of low self-esteem in us is seen when we frequently make self-disparaging remarks like, “I never seem to do anything right,” or “I’d better keep my mouth shut -- nobody will be interested in my ideas!” (Of course, most of us occasionally experience a slump in self-esteem and confidence, especially when we are troubled, tired, not feeling well, etc., but we do not deserve to feel this way very much of the time!)

⊕₃ Consider making some new decisions about yourself. It is clear that growth in self-esteem comes more from THINKING, DECIDING, and ACTING, than it does from FEELING. That is, even when we are not feeling very good about ourselves, we can decide to act in ways that are good for us. Example: I decide to get more exercise, because I believe I deserve to be as healthy as possible. Then, when I make that kind of decision and act on it, I begin to feel better about myself.

⊕₃ Work on taking your own ideas, feelings, wishes, etc. seriously. After all, if you believe you count and are worthwhile, you will listen to yourself, just as you take others seriously and listen to them. If you want to, you can learn to be in better touch with your inner self. Instead of withholding yourself from others, deliberately work on learning to express yourself to them. Tell them what you think, how you feel, what you want, etc. When you do this in a way that does not blame or attack others, both your esteem and their esteem will grow.

⊕₃ Take a kind and accepting stance toward yourself. None of us gets very close to perfection, and life really gets complicated at times. Almost all of us want to do right, even though we make mistakes. Surely we do not deserve to think poorly of ourselves and live lives that are joyless and unfulfilled. We deserve to really like ourselves, to be our own best friend. The spirit of caring and acceptance toward ourselves helps provide the kind of atmosphere in which we and others can grow, and even thrive!

Gerald Hill

Some Suggestions for Next Steps

If you continue to find your time of bereavement very hard to deal with, and you sense the need for further help, we encourage you to consider one or both of the following steps:

☞ Ask for help in evaluating and understanding your situation. Seek out someone who is especially skilled in helping bereaved persons; e.g., a member of the clergy, a professional counselor, or therapist. Also, remember that Kaiser Hospice is always there to support you, even though it has been longer than one year!

☞ Look into becoming a member of a group experience for bereaved persons. It is not uncommon for persons who are a year or so past the death of a loved one to find that they are now ready to join with others who are going through similar experiences.

If you have succeeded in coming through your time of bereavement or nearly so, you may be interested in steps like the following:

☞ Write about your experience, stating what it was like for you, what helped you and what did not help you, as you worked through your loss. You may find that you will want to share what you have written with others.

☞ If you think you would be good at helping others who are bereaved and would like to try doing this, investigate training for this kind of service to others. Hospice programs, for example, are often looking for qualified persons to do bereavement follow-up with family members and friends and may offer training.

☞ Look into other opportunities for investing some of your ability, time and energy in some worthwhile undertaking. Becoming a hospital volunteer is one possibility. This may involve taking some specialized training or sharpening up some skills you already have.

Regardless of where you are in your own experience of bereavement, we hope you will remember some of the steps we have been emphasizing in these mailings:

☞ Make moves deliberately designed to enhance your self-image and self-esteem. Whatever you can do to help you look better and feel better is appropriate to do. You **DO** deserve to be one of the main sources of sunshine in your own life.

☞ Take good care of yourself. Is it time for a good medical checkup, or emotional checkup, or beauty checkup? Is it time for a trip to some favorite spot or to invite someone to come and see you?

☞ Be considerate and patient with yourself. Learn not to expect unfair or inhuman things of yourself. Get help with this if you need it!

We hope some of these suggestions work for you, or that they encourage you to take steps that are right for you.



Best Wishes !