

## GRIEF EDUCATION AND SUPPORT MAILING PROGRAM

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



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*First in a Series of Five Newsletters*

### About This Newsletter...

**T**his newsletter is the first in a series of five, which will be sent to you over the next twelve months. The information in these newsletters has been helpful to many of the bereaved people we serve. There is no charge to you for the newsletters. If you prefer not to receive these mailings, please phone (619) 641-4100 and we will delete your name from our mailing list, or simply wait until you receive our next mailing, and use the form provided to let us know that you would like us to discontinue the mailings.

We hope the information provided will offer you comfort and hope.

*Pat Myers, LCSW  
Bereavement Coordinator*

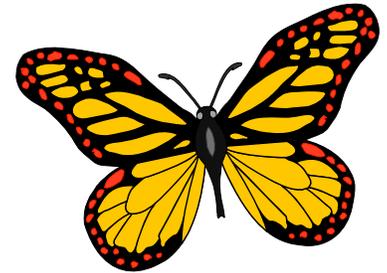
### *General Information About Grief*

**G**rief is a long, drawn-out process, full of ups and downs, and this process generally takes longer than is recognized by society. Be patient with yourself as you go through the grief process.

There is no grief like one's own grief. Each person's grief is individual and no two people will grieve exactly alike.

If you feel like crying, cry. It is a healthy and acceptable way to express grief and release tension in our society. To bottle up your emotions is to do yourself harm.

Friends and relatives may feel uncomfortable around you. They may want to help you in some way but don't know how to go about it, what to say, or what to do. Help them be supportive to you by



being open and honest about your needs and feelings. Talk about your loved one so they know it is appropriate for them to do so too.

If possible, put off any major decisions (changing jobs, moving, changing lifestyles, remarriage, etc.) for at least a year.

Physical reactions to the death of a loved one may include loss of appetite, overeating, sexual difficulties, sleeplessness, chest pain,

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headaches, and loss of energy. Try to maintain a balanced diet. Get plenty of rest and exercise.

Avoid the use of drugs or alcohol. If you do use them, do it only under the care of a physician. Many can become addictive and, in addition, anesthetize a person against the pain of his/her loss. This may delay, complicate, or stop the grieving process.

Take time to decide what to do with your loved one's belongings and don't allow someone to make these decisions for you. This does not have to be done immediately and you can do it a bit at a time as you are ready.

You may become so depressed that you feel you have nothing left to live for, or you may wish to join your loved one in order to escape the pain you are feeling. This is not abnormal and many feel this way. But, be aware that the clouds do clear and you will, once again, have meaning and purpose in you life.

Guilt, real or imagined, is a normal part of grief. It is expressed in such thoughts as "if only I would have" or "I should have" etc. To resolve guilt feelings, it is important to express them and forgive ourselves for the things we ought not feel guilty about. Unresolved guilt makes one feel miserable and can hold one up in the grief process.

It is normal to feel angry about your loss. It is normal to find someone to blame (the doctor, the nurses, other family members, etc.) You may find yourself very volatile and resentful. It is important to

share your angry feelings in an acceptable manner.

Children have been called the "forgotten mourners." If you have grieving children in your family, don't forget them. Share your feelings and tears with them as this will allow them to feel included, to be part of the grieving process.

Anniversaries of your beloved's birth, death, marriage etc. and Holidays are difficult times. Give thought ahead of time as to how you will spend the day. Often it is helpful to do something special with special friends.

The death of your beloved may cause you to take a look at your philosophy of life, to question God, to re-evaluate old beliefs, to change goals. This too, is normal. You will never be your "old self" again, for you are not the same person you were before, but you can find new meaning in life and move ahead.

*Author Unknown*



## ***What To Expect In Normal Grief***

You can expect that

*First in a series of Five Newsletters*

your grief will...

***Take longer***  
than most people think.

***Take more energy***  
than you would have ever imagined.

***Involve many changes***  
and be continually developing

***Show itself***  
in all spheres of your life - psychological, social and physical.

***Entail mourning***  
not only for the person, but for the hopes and dreams you held for and with that person, and for the needs that will go unmet because of the death.

***Involve a wide variety***  
of feelings and reactions such as depression and sadness.

You will...

***Grieve for many things***  
both symbolic and tangible - not just the death alone.

***Grieve for what you have lost now***  
and for what you have lost for the future.

You may...

***Have a lack of self-esteem***

***Lack self-concern***

***Experience Grief spasms***  
acute upsurges of grief that occur suddenly with no warning.

***Have trouble thinking***  
remembering, organizing, intellectual processing, and decision making.

***Feel like you are going crazy.***

***Be obsessed***  
with death and preoccupied with the deceased.

***Find yourself***  
acting socially in ways that are different than before.

***Begin a search for meaning***  
and may question your religion and philosophy of life.

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Certain truths that you need to note include:

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***Special dates***  
events, and stimuli will bring upsurges in grief. This is normal.

***Society will have unrealistic expectations***  
about your mourning and may respond inappropriately to you.

***Friends may avoid you***  
because they are unsure of how to respond to people who are grieving. Give them a chance. Tell them what you need because they do not know.

***Your grief will bring an intense amount of emotion***  
that will surprise you and those around you. Most of us are

unprepared for the response we have to a major loss.

***Don't be afraid.***

Many people fear that “letting go” of emotions and crying will mean they are unable to stop or gain control again. This does not happen. People cry as much as they need to, and tears are healing!

*Unexpressed grief can damage your physical and emotional health.*

Jan Salmon, PHN, MS  
Grieving, by Theresa Rando

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## ***Moving Through Grief***

Grief is an intense and complex journey for most of us. We cannot complete this journey overnight, as much as we'd like to. To successfully move through our grief, we need to take an active role in our own healing process. It helps to understand how human beings respond to loss, for most of us have questions about whether our feelings and reactions are normal. Let us look at the journey through grief. Each part of the journey requires something of us.

We react to our loss with shock, numbness and disbelief. When we experience a trauma, one of our first reactions is to shut down, or go numb. This cushions us from overwhelming feelings during our early grief. We may feel as if we are on automatic pilot during the first weeks. Even an expected death is a shock. We just can't know how a particular loss is going to feel until the

loss actually occurs. Part of us may feel that the loss is unreal, a nightmare or a terrible mistake. How long it takes each of us to come out of our numbness depends on the individual circumstances surrounding each loss.

We begin the difficult journey of understanding that our loss is real. As the numbness wears off, we begin to realize what the loss is going to mean to us. This explains why many bereaved persons feel worse after a few months have gone by. The reality of this loss starts to sink in. Part of us may still be looking for our deceased loved one to come back into our life again. We begin some of our hardest grieving at a point when the support we got immediately after the death has tapered off.

We must allow ourselves to experience the pain of our grief in all of its forms. There are no shortcuts through the pain of loss. We can “stuff down” feelings, and delay grieving, but the grief will not diminish until we burn through it by experiencing it fully. In a culture where we often equate pain with weakness, it is important to give ourselves permission to allow our pain its natural course.

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Below are some common emotions and behaviors that make up the pain of grief.



### Typical Experiences During Grief:

Emptiness	Change in appetite	Anger
Disorganization	Extreme loneliness	Guilt
Disorientation	Increased irritability	Helplessness
Indecisiveness	Feeling abandoned	Depression
Vulnerability	Inability to concentrate	Panicky thoughts
Anxiety	Loss of interest in life	Relief
Change in sleep patterns	Questioning of belief system	

Pain is also expressed through our physical body. It is common to have strong physical reactions to grief. It is always a sound idea to get a physical exam to assess the physical impact of the stress we've been under and to relieve fears about our own health.

We identify how our environment has changed and begin to develop new roles, routines and skills in response to the changes. Losses tear apart the fabric of the routines around which our life is structured. They rob us of our comfortable roles. Any changes, especially involuntary ones, disrupt the flow of our life. Our responsibilities may seem to have doubled overnight. Grieving the loss of our routines is an essential part of healing. It is helpful to minimize change elsewhere in our life when we are faced with a loss. It is also important to be gentle and patient with ourselves as we establish new roles and routines and take on additional responsibilities. We are often forced to forge a new identity as part of our recovery.

We learn what we must do to survive in our changed world.

We eventually come to a point where we choose to say "Yes" to life again. Grieving is terribly hard, exhausting work and initially demands much of our energy. When enough healing has occurred, we no longer focus as much of our energy on our loss. At this point, we find renewed energy to invest in the life ahead of us. We come to understand that it is possible for us to achieve a happy full life again, though it will be different from our life before our loss.

*(Developed by Kansas City Hospice,  
underwritten by Prime Health Foundation)*

## The Physical Side of Grief

**G**rief is an emotionally intense journey, and it is also a very physical experience for most grieving persons. Even when the death is expected, grief may strike with the force of a physical blow, leaving us shaken emotionally and physically. Many caregivers pushed themselves physically and now are feeling the effects of that.

Most caregivers, even with the best of help, lost sleep, ate erratically and did more heavy lifting than usual. Caregivers may have skipped routine health checks, screenings and follow-up visits for existing health problems of their own. Many caregivers admit afterwards that they just did not know how they did it -- that they were running on sheer will power or adrenaline. They find that they don't realize how deeply fatigued they are until after the end of their loved one's illness.

Don't expect fatigue to disappear overnight. Sleep problems are common during bereavement and may complicate attempts to catch up on rest.

Most of us have areas of our bodies that "act up" under stress. Some get headaches or stomachaches, others have muscle pains or intestinal problems. During bereavement, these vulnerable areas are likely to reflect stress levels, and grieving persons may develop other physical discomforts.

## Typical Physical Reactions to Grief

Headaches  
Dizziness  
Fatigue  
Nausea  
Dry mouth  
Stomachaches

Shortness of breath  
Intestinal problems  
Heaviness in chest  
Changes in appetite  
More accident prone  
Weakness in muscles

Weakened immune system  
Tightness in the throat  
Skin problems  
Changes in sleep pattern  
Hollowness in stomach  
Over sensitive to stimuli

Increased concern about individual health and the health of other family members is normal. Losing someone close brings up feelings of physical vulnerability. There may be a period when grieving persons worry excessively about every little bump or cough. A physical exam to assess the physical impact of stress and to relieve fears is always a sound idea. When the loss occurs through an accident or violent act, there may be increased concerns about safety. The

individual may perceive the world as a dangerous place and will worry when a family member is out of sight or late returning home. The sound of a siren may cause feelings of panic.

Because survivors are often fatigued and distracted during bereavement, they tend to be slightly more accident prone and need to be particularly careful to pay attention when driving or performing other tasks that require complete concentration. Survivors may

need to remind themselves to take time for self care. Many caregivers have made someone else top priority for so long that they automatically put their own

needs on the back burner. It's time to refocus and ask, "What is my body telling me about its needs for food, rest and exercise?"

*(Developed by Kansas City Hospice, underwritten by Prime Health Foundation.)*



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## Hospice Bereavement Department Book List

### Adults

1. **A Compassionate Practical Guide to Being a Widow** - Lyy Caine. (Brief and to the point)
2. **After Suicide** - John Hewett. (Christian orientation, practical information)
3. **A Grief Observed** - C.S. Lewis (The author examines his experience after the death of his wife)
4. **A Little Book of Comfort** - Anthony Guest. (A collection of poems)
5. **The Bereaved Parent** - Harriet Schiff. (Personal account of this mother's story when her own child died; good book, practical information and support)
6. **Beyond Grief: A guide for Recovering from the Death of a Loved One** - Carol Staudacher, New Harbinger Publications, Inc. 1987. (Specific suggestions on how to cope with everyday life)
7. **The Courage to Grieve** - Judy Tatlebaum. (Outstanding book with some good exercises, good ideas, human)
8. **Don't Take My Grief Away From Me** - Doug Manning. (A minister's honest look at grief, easy to read)
9. **Does Anybody Else Hurt This Bad and Live?** - Carlene Vester Eneroth, Otis Publications, Spokane, WA. (written from the perspective of someone who has been there, easy to read)
10. **Final Gifts: Understanding the Special Awareness, Needs & Communication of the Dying** - Maggie Callahan & Patricia Kelley, Poseidon Press, New York, 1992.
11. **Good Grief** - Granger Westberg. (ten "stages" of grief, Christian orientation)
12. **The Grief Recovery Handbook** - John W. James & Frank Cherry. (step by stop process for recovering from grief; practical, useful)
13. **Grieving: How to go on Living When Someone you loves Dies** - Therese A. Rando. (excellent book, easy to follow, addresses different challenges faced depending on your relationship to person who died)
14. **The Healing Power of Humor** - Allen Klein, Jeremy P. Tharcher, Inc. (the author, a widower, helps us explore the many deterrents to laughter and gives techniques for getting through difficult times)
15. **How to Survive the Loss of a Child** - Catherine M. Sanders, PhD., Prima Publishing, 1992. (surviving the death of a child, stages, working through them, healing, from the perspective of a grieving parent)
16. **How to Survive the Loss of a Love** - Melba Colgrove, H. Bloomfield & P. McWilliams. (concrete activity suggestions, short easy to read poems, also has a workbook)
17. **How to Survive the Loss of a Parent: A Guide for Adults** - Lois F. Akner & Catherine Whitney. (Personal experiences with concrete suggestions on what to do)
18. **Journal For Joy** - Joyce Chapman. (a guide for journaling, simple to read and understand)
19. **Learning to say Goodbye: When a Parent Dies** - Eda LeShann. (practical, good)
20. **Living When a Loved One has Died** - Earl Grollman. (excellent book, speaks from the heart, easy to read)
21. **Living with Death and Dying** - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. (classic in field, stages of dying)
22. **Losing a Parent: Passage to a New Way of Living** - Alexandra Kennedy, Phd. (very helpful for adults who experience the death of a parent)
23. **Men and Grief** - Carol Staudacher, New Harbinger Publications, Inc. 1991. (a guide for men surviving the death of a loved one)
24. **Meetings at the Edge** - Stephen Levine. (conversations with people who are dying)
25. **Necessary Losses** - Judith Viorst, Fawcett Gold Medal, New York, 1986.
26. **On Death and Dying** - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. (classic in the field of death and dying, stages of dying)
27. **On Your Own: A Widow's Passage to Emotional and Financial Well-being** - Alexandra Armstrom & Mary Donahue. (very complete)
28. **Parental Grief** - Dennis Klass, PhD, the Springer Publishing Company, New York, 1988. (explores the unique nature of parental bereavement and the process through which in can finally be resolved)

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**Hospice Bereavement Department Book List (Continued)**

**Adults (continued)**

34. **Parental Loss of a Child** - Therese Rando, PhD, Editor, Research Press, Illinois, 1986. (a compilation of articles written by professionals, on the death of a child)
35. **Questions and Answers on Death and Dying** - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. (in response to "On Death and Dying")
36. **The Road Less Traveled** - Scot F. Peck, M.D., A Touchstone Book, Simon and Schuster, New York: 1978.
37. **Safe Passage: Words to Help the Grieving Hold Fast and Let Go** - Molly Fumia. (a collection of 273 brief statements which could be used as daily readings)
38. **The Screaming Room** - Barbara Peabody. (a mother's son dies from AIDS, written diary format; honest and much heralded book)
39. **Someone You Love is Dying** - Martin Shepard. (a guide for helping and coping)
40. **To Help You Through the Hurting** - Marjorie Holmes. (collection of brief, comforting writings)
41. **To Live Until We Say Goodbye** - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. (pictures and stories about people who are dying)
42. **Understanding Grief; Helping Yourself Heal** - Alan D. Wolfelt. (a compassionate guide to coping with the death of someone loved)
43. **Up From Grief** - Bernadine Kries and Alice Pattie. (easy to read, practical)
44. **What Murder Leaves Behind** - Doug McGee. (excellent book for victims of homicide)
45. **When Bad Things Happen to Good People** - Rabbi Harold Kushner. (a father's attempt to make sense out of his son's death, his own pain, and the pain of others enduring undeserved misfortunes)
46. **When Parents Die** - Edward Myers, Library call #155.937.
47. **Who Dies?** - Stephen Levine. (philosophical viewpoint of grief, death)
48. **Why Her Why Now** - Lon Elmer, Bantam Books, 1990. (a man's journey through love and death and grief, from the perspective of someone who's been there)
49. **Widow** - Lynn Caine. (useful, especially for younger widows)
50. **The Widower** - Willard K. Kohn & Jane Burgess Kohn. (excellent, "what he faces, feels, needs")

**Children**

1. **A Window to Heaven, When Children See Life In Death** - Diane M. Komp, M.D., Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapid MI, 1992. (a dying child's perspective about death and dying)
2. **Charlotte's Web** - E.B. White. (life and death of Charlotte, the spider)
3. **Everett Anderson's Goodbye** - Lucille Clifton. (a little boy trying to come to grips with his father's death)
4. **Explaining Death to Children** - Earl A. Grollman, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969.
5. **The Fall of Freddie the Leaf** - Leo Buscaglia. (a story for all ages)
6. **Geranium Mourning** - E. Sandy Powell, Carol Rhoda Publisher. (a boy deals with his father's death)
7. **The Grieving Child, A Parent's Guide** - Helen Fitzgerald, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1992. (a primer for parents in helping their children through the process of grief)
8. **Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss** - Claudia L. Jewett, the Harvard Common Press, Harvard MA, 1982. (a blend of explanations and strategies for aiding children who've experienced death, divorce, or some other alteration of family structure)
9. **Helping Children Grieve When Someone They Love Dies** - Theresa Huntley, Augsburg Fortress, 1991. (this book will help parents listen to children, answer their questions, and guide them in coping with their feelings)

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**Hospice Bereavement Department Book List (Continued)**

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**Children (Continued)**

10. **How It Feels When a Parent Dies** - Jill Krementz. (excellent, from point of view of children)
11. **If I Die And When I Do** - Franki and Barbara Sternberg. (exploring death with young people from teacher's point of view)
12. **The Kid's Book about Death and Dying** - Eric E. Rofes and the Unit at Fayerweather Street School, Little, Brown and Company, Boston MA, 1985. (questions and answers about death and dying from the perspective of children)
13. **Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children** - Briyan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen, Bantam Books.
14. **Love, Mark: A Series of Letters on Grief for Children** - Mark Scrivanti. (Letters of hope for bereaved children and teens)
15. **Oh, the Places You'll Go** - Dr. Seuss, Random House, New York, 1990
16. **On Children and Death** - Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. (a touching and inspired work about how children and their parents can and do cope with death)
17. **Talking About Death: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child** - Earl Grollman. (one of the best books for use in discussing death with children)
18. **The Tenth Good Thing About Barney** - Judith Viorst. (when Barney the cat dies, his owner discovers something positive comes from his death)
19. **When Grandpa Died** - Margaret Stevens. (good handling of death in the family)
20. **Why Did Grandpa Die?** - Barbara Shook Hazen, a Golden Book, Western Publishing Co., Inc. (a girl experiences grandpa's illness, death, and her grief in the year to come.