

## WHAT DO WE NEED DURING GRIEF

*An important aspect of healing after the death of a loved one is being able to take good care of yourself. We hope you will consider the following suggestions as you move through the grieving process.*

- TIME:** Time alone, and time with others whom you trust and who will listen when you need to talk. Months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings that go along with loss.
- REST:** Relaxation - Exercise - Nourishment - Diversion – You may need extra amounts of things you needed before. Hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a “cause” to work to help others – any of these may give you a lift. Grief is an exhausting process emotionally. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people and things you love.
- SECURITY:** Try to reduce or find help for financial or other stresses in your life. Allow yourself to be close to those you trust. Getting back into routine helps. You may need to allow yourself to do things at your own pace.
- HOPE:** You may find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered and time does help may give you hope that sometime in the future your grief will be less raw and painful.
- CARING:** Try to allow yourself to accept the expressions of caring from others even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative also suffering the same loss may bring a feeling of closeness with that person.
- GOALS:** For a while, it will seem that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month, helps you get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a rule of thumb. At first, don't be surprised if your enjoyment of these things isn't the same. This is normal. As time passes, you may need to work on some longer-range goals to give some structure and direction to your life. You may need guidance or counseling to help with this.

SMALL PLEASURES: Do not underestimate the healing effort of small pleasures, as you are ready. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food – all are small steps toward regaining your pleasure in life itself.

### **NATURAL AND NORMAL GRIEF RESPONSES**

Grieving over the loss of a loved one is a very painful experience. At times it can seem overwhelming. Many of us wonder whether we are grieving in the “right” way and worry whether the feelings we experience are “normal.”

Here are some of the more common feelings that may be encountered immediately after the death of your loved one and in the months following your loss:

- Feeling numb, in a fog, with frequent trouble concentrating
- Having difficulty believing that the death has really happened
- Feeling tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest or in the pit of one’s stomach
- Having a loss of appetite or a desire to eat more than usual
- Having a desire to smoke, drink or use drugs in a greater amount than before
- Having difficulty sleeping, waking early, and dreaming frequently of your loved one
- Being overly concerned with your health
- Feeling exhausted and lacking energy
- Feeling low during special occasions, such as birthdays and holidays
- Spending money on things usually not purchased
- Feeling preoccupied with financial concerns
- Telling or retelling things about your loved one and the experience of his or her death
- Talking things over with the deceased person
- Feeling mood changes over the slightest things
- Feeling guilty for what was said or not said or for not having done enough
- Being angry or irritated at the wrong person or at the world
- Having difficulty making decisions on your own
- Sensing your loved one’s presence
- Believing you hear his or her voice or expecting him or her to come back
- Experiencing an intense preoccupation with the life of the deceased
- Assuming mannerisms or traits of your loved one

- Feeling as though life doesn't have any meaning
- Not wanting to be with people
- Feeling self-pity and not feeling needed
- Crying at unexpected times

These are natural and normal grief responses. Remember, expressing your thoughts, reactions, and feelings to others can be helpful.

### **HOW HOSPICE CAN HELP YOU OVERCOME YOUR GRIEF:**

- Making available a trusted and compassionate person who can be with you to listen to your concerns.
- Providing education about the grief process and what you might expect to happen during your period of bereavement.
- Teaching new ways to cope with the stress of loss and grief.
- Providing help in becoming involved in a new life – seeking out new support persons, groups and activities.
- Providing a sense of relief simply by knowing someone is available in times of need.

### **WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF:**

- Sharing your thoughts and ideas out loud can often help you gain a better perspective about the meaning and effects of your loss.
- Discussing painful feelings such as despair, anger, or guilt, is a way to reduce their intensity.
- Reminiscing about your loved one will help you gain a better perspective on the relationship that you shared with your loved one.
- Discussing with someone the changes you are experiencing in your life may ease the transition to a new beginning.