

PERSPECTIVES ON  
LOSS & GRIEF  
ISSUE I

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# TRANSITIONS

A HOSPICE BEREAVEMENT NEWSLETTER

**Dear Friends of Hospice:**

The loss of a loved one through death is one of the most difficult experiences we all must face at some point in our lives. However, most of us are not prepared for the long journey of grief that faces us. This journey can be frightening, painful, overwhelming and lonely. Grief is a normal and necessary process, and it takes time. It may take months or even years, depending on the intensity of the loss.

Acknowledging that the road ahead may be difficult for you, Tabitha Hospice offers a program of supportive correspondence to those we have worked with who have lost a loved one. During the next year, you will be receiving twelve Transitions hospice bereavement newsletters from our office. These mailings will address many issues surrounding the grief process. It is our hope the newsletters will provide you with an understanding of grief as well as some practical suggestions that will aid you as you adapt to your loss and begin to heal.

Sincerely,

**The Bereavement Team**

Tabitha Hospice, A Collaboration with Immanuel

## WHY LEARN ABOUT GRIEF? →

After the death of a loved one, we're often unsure how to "go on from here" or what to expect. Because the subject and practice of grieving are not yet widely discussed in our society, many of us do not know what to expect following the loss of a loved one. We don't know how to heal the hurt created by grief or how to live with it.

Understanding grief does not necessarily simplify it or lessen the pain, but it can help ease the additional confusion and anxiety that can make our grief process more difficult. Learning about grief can help us cope more effectively with our emotions and take steps toward healing and building a new life for ourselves.

## REMEMBER, CHILDREN ALSO GRIEVE →

If there are young children or teens in your family, remember they are grieving as well. Their reactions will be different than yours, but any child old enough to love is old enough to grieve. It is normal to want to "protect" children from death, but it simply is not possible. Just because children are not talking about death does not mean they are not thinking about it. If adults send the message that it is not okay to talk about death, children will be reluctant to ask questions.

By keeping communication open, children will learn to think of death as a natural part of life and have less fear of it. Children can be harmed and suffer more from overprotection and lack of adult support than from the death experience itself. If a school-age child has experienced the loss of a loved one, parents should contact the child's teacher and explain what has happened. It is important to be honest with children and to share true feelings with them. If children see adults crying, for example, they will know that it is also okay for them to cry. Encourage children to ask questions and then answer with simple facts in age-appropriate words and simple statements. They can also benefit from reassuring hugs.

## OTHER RESOURCES →

For additional support, please contact our Hospice Bereavement Team at 402.819.4949.

For additional reading materials, please contact The Centering Corporation at 866.218.0101 or [www.centering.org](http://www.centering.org)

Words of *Wisdom*

**"If you can give something a name and a shape, you can have power over it. If it remains nameless and shapeless, it will continue to have power over you."**

*Native American Proverb*



**TABITHA**  
Hospice

A COLLABORATION  
WITH  
 **Immanuel**

# Grief is a normal and natural reaction to the death of a loved one. It can affect everything about us, including our emotions, thoughts, physical sensations, behavior and spirituality.

## NORMAL GRIEF REACTIONS

### Emotions

- › Sadness
- › Anger
- › Guilt | self-reproach
- › Anxiety
- › Loneliness
- › Helplessness
- › Shock
- › Yearning
- › Relief
- › Numbness
- › Despair
- › Hopelessness
- › Bitterness
- › Fear

### Physical Sensations

- › Hollowness in the stomach
- › Tightness in the chest
- › Tightness in the throat
- › Oversensitivity to noise
- › Shortness of breath
- › Weakness of muscles
- › Lack of energy
- › Dry mouth
- › Rapid heartbeat
- › Muscle tension
- › Fatigue
- › Decreased resistance to illness

### Spirituality

- › Emptiness (reason to live challenged)
- › Destruction of beliefs/ideals
- › Search for meaning
- › Pessimism or idealism
- › Experiences of connectedness/wholeness rebirth
- › Compassion

### Behaviors

- › Sleep disturbances
- › Appetite disturbances
- › Absent-minded behavior
- › Social withdrawal
- › Dreams of the deceased
- › Avoiding reminders of the loss
- › Searching | calling out
- › Sighing
- › Crying
- › Visiting places or carrying objects that remind of the deceased
- › Treasuring objects that belong to the deceased
- › Increase or decrease in activity

### Thought Patterns

- › Disbelief
- › Confusion
- › Preoccupation
- › Sense of presence (of the deceased)
- › Lack of concentration
- › Lowered self-esteem
- › Repeated review of the loss event
- › Increase or decrease of dreams
- › Search to understand implications of the loss
- › Sense of depersonalization (“I walk down the street and nothing seems real, including myself.”)

## GRIEF IS UNIQUE

▶ While the death of a loved one is an experience we all share, no two individuals will grieve the same way, even in the same family. The grief response is **UNIQUE** to each individual and can include a wide variety of emotions. Each person’s response can be affected by many factors, such as:

- › Circumstances surrounding the death
- › Your health, age, sex and family circumstances
- › Your perception of what others expect of you
- › Nature of the relationship (close, distant, dependent)
- › Prior grief experiences
- › Support available to you
- › Religious and cultural beliefs
- › Other events in one’s life

Grief affects people in various ways, and many people do not realize that difficulty concentrating on even simple tasks, wide swings of emotions, or even questioning of previously held values and beliefs, can be some of the many natural responses to grief.

It is important to remember not to compare your grief to that of others. There are no rules or prescribed formulas for grieving. Do it in your own time and in your own way.

## GRIEF IS A PROCESS

▶ Grief is a process—not an event. People often ask, “How long will this grief last?” We want the pain to be over quickly. However, grief takes time, and there is no quick fix or a timetable for grief. It is not unusual for the grief process to continue for years.

This does not mean that your emotions will continue with the same intensity, but strong waves of grief may come when you least expect them. Good days will eventually outnumber the bad days.

Please be patient with yourself, and don’t try to rush your grief. Your body, mind, and heart need time and energy to mend. Don’t take on new responsibilities right away. Don’t overextend yourself. Keep decision-making to a minimum. Try to take “one day at a time” and grieve at your own pace.

You will never be exactly the same as you were before the death, but you can be happy again. Life will eventually return to normal, but it will be a “new normal” from what you knew before.

## COMMON GRIEF MYTHS/MISCONCEPTIONS

**Myth:** Grief happens in stages.

› **REALITY:** Grief is a process—one that is usually not orderly

**Myth:** You’ll get over it.

› **REALITY:** You never “get over” the loss of someone you love. You can, however, learn to cope with your loss and integrate it into your life.

**Myth:** Time will heal.

› **REALITY:** Time alone does not heal. Working through your grief helps you heal.

**Myth:** Keep busy. Don’t think.

› **REALITY:** Ignoring grief will not make it go away. It is only through acknowledging and dealing with your loss that you can heal.