

ISSUE 6
PERSPECTIVES ON
LOSS & GRIEF

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TRANSITIONS

A HOSPICE BEREAVEMENT NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends of Hospice:

Each month, we try to provide information that will assist you as you cope with the loss that has occurred in your life. We realize different coping strategies work for different people. Grief work is difficult and requires energy that you may not feel you have.

Journaling can be a helpful way of coping with your grief. Whether or not you have ever journaled, we hope that you will read the following information and consider giving it a try. People who have tried journaling feel it has been very beneficial as they struggle to make sense out of what they are experiencing. It is helpful when you cannot sleep or would like to talk, but don't want to bother a family member or friend. Some thoughts or feelings may seem too overwhelming or confusing to try to share with anyone. Writing those things down on paper can help you to clarify them and make them seem less powerful.

Sincerely,

The Bereavement Team

Tabitha Hospice, A Collaboration with Immanuel

JOURNALING

The words "diary" and "journal" are often used interchangeably. However, they have different meanings and different purposes. A diary is a record of the events in one's life. A journal, on the other hand, records personal thoughts and feelings. The purpose of journal writing is to afford you the opportunity to reflect upon the meaning and the significance of events in your life as they apply to your inner self. You are writing solely for yourself and for no one else's eyes.

The Benefits of Journaling

The act of putting your ideas on paper forces you to formulate and clarify your thoughts and feelings. This leads to release and relief. Something inside you is freed, and it feels good. Writing

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Words of *Wisdom*

"Pour your heart down on paper, and look at it and deal with it."

Dale Evans

"I can shake off everything as I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn."

Anne Frank

"Tears are words that need to be written."

Paulo Coelho

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How long will this take? For each of us it will be different.

Some find that getting involved with activities or groups is helpful, others need more time for solitude, some find their personal faith to be a great help, many find that they move on more quickly if they do something for others.

Wherever you are in your recovery process right now, we want to assure you that **life can be good again**. You have lived through a difficult, uncontrollable event, but you have survived. You have been changed, but you will recover.

You have a scar that will always remain. It becomes lighter with time, but it is always there as a reminder that intense healing once occurred.

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



TABITHA
Hospice

A COLLABORATION WITH
Immanuel

is an effective yet harmless way of “letting off steam” by providing you with a “fully accepting friend” who allows you to vent all of your powerful and disruptive emotions. Intentionally dealing with one’s emotions, especially during times of crisis and stress, helps a person move more quickly through those difficult times.

Journal writing also leads to self-awareness. When you make the move from simply thinking something to actually writing it down, awareness unfolds. Writing forces you to choose which of your thoughts are most important, thus getting you in touch with your sense of values.

Guidelines for Journaling

Your journal can be any kind of notebook. Write when you feel like it—it does not need to be daily, but should be regularly. Do not be concerned about grammar, spelling, punctuation or penmanship. Just let the words flow from your heart and mind to your hand. Here are some suggestions for your journal writing:

- › Find a comfortable place to write—in a favorite room or chair. Pick a private spot with interruptions kept to a minimum.
- › Some journal writers like to have a type of ritual such as lighting a candle, pouring a cup of tea or meditating quietly before writing.
- › Some like to have music playing, others prefer silence.
- › Always, and above all, write only for yourself. Be honest. Don’t write for someone else or what you think you “should” write. Your journal is your private possession.
- › Always date your journal entries. When you go back later to read your entries, you may be surprised at the progress you have made.

Ideas for Journal Writing

- › Consider directing your writing to one person: yourself, your loved one, a fictional friend or God.
- › Try using any of the following as sentence beginnings:
 - I wish you could have...
 - Not having you is hardest when...
 - I am most lonely when...
 - Sometimes I feel angry...
 - When I’m angry, I usually...
 - I am worrying about...
 - You left me with...
 - A special memory is...
 - What I’d like to ask you is...
 - I regret that...
 - It’s a daily struggle for me to...
 - Today I noticed that...
 - You would have enjoyed...
 - Your greatest gift to me is...

These are suggestions to help you get started. You will have many more of your own once you begin. We hope you will put “buy myself a notebook” on your list for today.



“In the months after my daughter’s death, I filled four notebooks with entries—writing sometimes daily, sometimes several times a day, sometimes only once in several days. I described feelings, the events of the day, occasions of recall, of sorrow and hope. It was a means of moving the grief away, getting it down somewhere else, siphoning it off.”

Martha Whitmore Hickman

CAN LIFE EVER BE GOOD AGAIN?

▶ The grief you feel might be compared to a forest fire. As it rages out of control, it destroys all life within reach. As it burns and destroys, we are powerless to stop it, and it seems nothing will ever be good again.

Gradually, the fire dies down, and we are surrounded by the ugliness of black charred death and destruction. But after a time, the rains come, carrying away the soot and ashes and slowly we see small green shoots of life spring forth.

And so it will be with our grief. A time will come when we will see signs of green life in our lives once again. It may be enjoying an afternoon with a friend. It may be laughing out loud and not feeling guilty about it. It may be realizing that an hour or day has gone by, and we haven’t been consumed with sadness. We are beginning to heal.

Eventually, the forest grows back, but it has changed. It will never again look exactly the same.

And we have changed also. Our lives will never be the same as they were. We are different people since the death of our loved one. We will always carry the burning embers of that forest fire deep within our hearts.

Sometimes, the embers will be fanned back into flames again—on difficult days such as birthdays, anniversaries or holidays. These small fires are usually not as destructive and can be brought under control more easily.

After a period of time, the forest is green and full of life again. How long this takes depends upon the rainfall, sunlight, soil nutrients and other factors. Our lives can be rich and full again, too.

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“
Look, the trees
are turning
their own bodies
into pillars

of light,
are giving off the rich
fragrance of cinnamon
and fulfillment,

the long tapers
of cattails
are bursting and floating away over
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,
and every pond,
no matter what its
name is, is

nameless now.
Every year
everything
I have ever learned

in my lifetime
leads back to this: the fires
and the black river of loss
whose other side

is salvation,
whose meaning
none of us will ever know.
To live in this world

you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it

against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

Mary Oliver
In *Blackwater Woods*