

TRANSITIONS

A HOSPICE BEREAVEMENT NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends of Hospice:

The later stages of grief are often referred to as recovery, readjustment or reconciliation. During this time, you may feel some sign of returning hope or “becoming yourself again.” Most people find themselves changed from who they were at the beginning of the grief process. You may find that you are now more compassionate and understanding of others. You may find that you now set your priorities differently.

Reconciliation is essential if you are once again to live a satisfying, enriched life. It truly is possible to find meaning in life again following the death of a loved one.

Sincerely,

The Bereavement Team

Tabitha Hospice, A Collaboration with Immanuel

RECONCILIATION

By Dr. Alan Wolfelt

The final dimension of grief is often referred to as “resolution, recovery, reestablishment, or reorganization.” This dimension often suggests a total return to “normalcy,” and yet, in my personal as well as professional experience, everyone is changed by the experience of grief. For the mourner to assume that life will be exactly as it was prior to the death is unrealistic and potentially damaging. Recovery, as understood by some persons—mourners and caregivers alike—is all too often erroneously seen as an absolute, a perfect state of re-establishment.

Reconciliation is a term I believe to be more expressive of what occurs as the person works to integrate the new reality of moving forward in life without the physical presence of the person who has died. There is a renewed sense of energy and confidence, an ability to fully acknowledge the reality of the

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Words of *Wisdom*

“We must know the pain of loss; because if we never knew it, we would have no compassion for others, and we would become monsters of self-regard, creatures of unalloyed self-interest. The terrible pain of loss teaches humility to our prideful kind, has the power to soften uncaring hearts, to make a better person of a good one.”

Dean Koontz



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 Immanuel



But wherever she turned, in houses and in places, she found one talk after another of sadness and misfortune. Ultimately, she became so involved in ministering to other people’s grief that she forgot about her quest for the magical mustard seed, never realizing that it had in fact driven the sorrow out of her life.”

Rabbi Harold S. Kushner

When Bad Things Happen to Good People

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

death, and the capacity to become reinvolved with the activities of living. There is also an acknowledgment that pain and grief are a difficult, yet necessary, part of life and living.

As the experience of reconciliation unfolds, the mourner recognizes that life will be different without the presence of the significant person who has died. There is a realization that reconciliation is a process, not an event. The tasks involved in working through the completion of the emotional relationship with the person who has died, and redirecting energy and initiative toward the future, often takes longer and involves more labor than most people are aware. We, as human beings, never “get over” our grief, but instead become reconciled to it.

The specific course of mourning cannot be prescribed because it depends on many factors, such as the nature of the relationship with the person who died, the availability and helpfulness of a support system, the nature of the death, and the ritual or funeral experience. As a result, despite how much we know about dimensions of the grief experience, these dimensions will take different forms with different people. One of the major factors influencing the mourner’s movement toward reconciliation is that he or she be allowed to mourn in his or her own unique way and time.

Reconciliation is the dimension wherein the full reality of the death becomes a part of the mourner. Beyond an intellectual working through, there is an emotional working through. What has been understood at the “head” level is now understood at the “heart” level—the person who was loved is dead. When a reminder such as holidays, anniversaries, or other special memories are triggered, the mourner experiences the intense pain inherent in grief, yet the duration and intensity of the pain are typically less severe as the healing of reconciliation occurs.

The pain changes from being ever-present, sharp and stinging, to an acknowledged feeling of loss that has given rise to renewed meaning and purpose. The sense of loss does not completely disappear, yet softens and the intense pangs of grief become less frequent. Hope for a continued life emerges as the griever is able to make commitments to the future, realizing that the dead person will never be forgotten, yet knowing that one’s own life can and will move forward.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt is an internationally known consultant for grief and loss. He has written numerous publications on grief, which are available from the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, CO 303.226.6050

“ — THE MUSTARD SEED —

There is a Buddhist parable about a woman whose only son died. In her grief, she went to the holy man and said, “What prayers, what magical incantations do you have to bring my son back to life?”

Instead of sending her away or reasoning with her, he said to her, “Fetch me a mustard seed from a home that has never known sorrow. We will use it to drive the sorrow out of your life.”

The woman set off at once in search of that magical mustard seed. She came first to a splendid mansion, knocked on the door, and said, “I am looking for a home that has never known sorrow. Is this such a place? It is very important to me.” They told her, “You’ve certainly come to the wrong place,” and began to describe all the tragic things that had recently befallen them. The woman said to herself, “Who is better able to help these poor unfortunate people than I, who have had misfortune on my own?” She stayed to comfort them, then went on in her search for a home that had never known sorrow.

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→ CLUES YOU ARE GETTING BETTER

Since your grief is unique due to your own circumstances and relationships, your definition of what grief recovery is will also vary. The process of grief takes time and requires work and patience on your part, as well as on those around you. Healing does not happen all at once, but comes in bits and pieces.

Because it is slow, you may not recognize clues that you are working through your grief. The clues may be slight, but they can be important. The following clues may help you recognize the progress you have made in the past months:

- › An acceptance of the finality of the death of your loved one.
- › A renewed sense of energy and personal well-being.
- › A return to the eating, sleeping and exercise patterns that were present prior to the death.
- › The establishment of new and healthy relationships.
- › Being able to review both pleasant and unpleasant memories.
- › Realizing that painful comments made by family or friends are made in ignorance.
- › Being able to organize and make plans for your future.
- › Enjoying experiences in life that should normally be enjoyed without feeling guilty.
- › Accepting the way things are, rather than attempting to return things to the way they were.
- › Being able to enjoy time alone.
- › Sitting through a religious service without crying.
- › Listening to the music your loved one enjoyed without it being painful.
- › Having patience with yourself during “grief attacks.”
- › Being open to more changes in your life.
- › Being aware that one does not “get over” grief but can “get through” it.
- › Becoming aware that you have allowed yourself to grieve.
- › Reaching out to help someone else who is in need.
- › Enjoying laughing at a good joke.
- › Finding something to be thankful for.
- › Having more self-confidence and self-respect.
- › Acknowledging your new life and discovering personal growth from your grief.
- › Accepting times when intense grief recurs (such as holidays, birthdays, anniversaries or other special occasions).
- › Realizing that the roles your loved one played in your life are now being filled by yourself or others in a positive manner.