

BLESSED SACRAMENT CATHOLIC CHURCH

Grief Support Ministry Newsletter 3

This is the third in our series of periodic grief support newsletters and it focuses on information that may further explain the grief experience and help foster further healing.

Some writers on the subject of loss and bereavement believe there may be four phases of mourning for each individual and that these phases have no timeline, nor do they come in any particular order. The grief process is unique to each individual and their needs. The four phases they refer to are:

Numbness - a sense of disbelief at the loss

Yearning or Pining – wanting to have contact with our deceased loved one once more

Disorganized thoughts / Despair – what do I do now? How can I do this on my own?

Reorganized Behavior – finding a new path and new challenges, taking first steps

How do these match with what you are experiencing? Which phase are you currently experiencing? Are you sometimes in one phase and then in another - sometimes on the same day? Mourning is not neat and tidy flowing in sequence but can feel messy and unpredictable at times.

As the time since your loved one's passing grows longer, you may have found that some phases seem to pass smoothly while others require more time and effort before you begin to feel you have some control and comfort in your daily life.

However, the process is for you, it is important to remember to be patient with yourself as you continue to make adjustments. At times you manage well on your own and at other times you may feel the need for support from others.

Human experience has taught us that if we wait until we feel better before we make changes, we may find ourselves waiting a long time. However, if you decide you deserve to proceed with changes despite a seeming lack of enthusiasm on your part, you may feel better. Keep in mind that grieving does not help us “get over” our loss ~ it allows us to learn to live with it and function in spite of it.

If you feel you are at a place where you can start making changes, you may also feel that it will be necessary to seek support to mobilize your personal resources. Make a plan, consider what you need to carry out the plan and identify the source of your needed support and resources ~ whether financial, emotional or spiritual ~ and connect with those you trust to help and support you. Make a commitment to yourself that you will make the best decision for YOU not necessarily the decisions others think best.

FACING GRIEF AND LETTING GO

Here are some suggestions to help you face your grief. Consider what is important for you. You may feel the need to use them all, or only a few. Or you may find others that are helpful for you alone. As “Captain of the Ship“, set your course and follow it, making adjustments when you need to in order to sail through rough waters.

Own your feelings.

We own our thoughts and feelings by identifying and acknowledging them. Owning and accepting can stop us from pushing them aside or denying them. Even when we do the best, we could under very difficult circumstances, we can still be hard on ourselves. If you conclude you really have something to feel guilty about, talk it over with someone you trust or a counselor. If you have a religious faith to live by, talk with your God in your own way in your thoughts or prayers or seek counsel with a trusted religious advisor.

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Honor the time you need.

Give yourself time to work through your complicated thoughts and feelings or emotions. Grief is different for you than the grief of others. Show consideration for yourself by not expecting too much, too soon. Time alone, time with others – however long it takes YOU to feel and understand who you are and where or what you want to be.

Give yourself space.

You may need extra amounts of things you needed before – hot baths, afternoon naps, trips, a “cause” to work for to help others ~ what YOU need to find yourself that extra “lift”. Grief can be exhausting so take time to replenish yourself. Do what is healing for you and what connects you to the people and things you love. Take time to make decisions. Be patient and gradually make decisions as a way to control and sustain your self-worth.

Look at how you are spending your time.

Getting back into a routine can help. Do things at your own pace. Set small but achievable goals. Give yourself something to look forward to. Live one day at a time. Don't worry if at first you don't feel the same level of enjoyment as before. Don't underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures. Recognize and reward yourself for the small achievements each day. And expect there to be days when nothing goes right – start the next day with a fresh slate. Healing occurs when we move out of our 'safe' boundaries and interact with others. New friends may be discovered who offer new opportunities for you. And your presence and support of them may be what they are needing also!

Connect with your lost loved one.

“Talk” with the one who died. Imagine them present and say what you need to say to them. Try to imagine what they might say back. Settle old, unfinished, business and work through the hard to handle ideas and feelings. Write the hard or angry words you could not say and let them be the last time you need to think them.

“Backsliding” is Okay!

The nature of grief is that after a period of feeling good we may suddenly find ourselves experiencing old feelings of sadness, despair or anger. It can happen over and over again, and it happens because as humans we cannot continue to take in all the pain and meaning of death at once. So, our body responds by letting it in a little at a time, allowing us to deal with it as we are able and eventually find ourselves “moving on”.

PRACTICING ACCEPTANCE

Accept Help.

Allow yourself to accept the expressions of caring from others even though they may be uneasy and awkward in presenting them. Helping those who may be suffering in unknown ways from your loss may bring a feeling of closeness and support for each other.

Accept Yourself.

Facing and accepting the death of a loved one is a necessary condition for continuing our own life.

Accept Your Limitations.

Try to be open with yourself and others about what you are going through. You may find hope in the experience of others. Remember that the greatest need of the bereaved is to have someone share their pain, their memories, and their sadness.

THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO LET GO

Letting go means adjusting to a new reality in which your loved one is no longer physically present.

Letting go means accepting whatever feelings such as anger, guilt, fear and/or sadness that accompanies death.

Letting go occurs when we tolerate the feelings of being able to wait, trust and hope again.

Letting go is not forgetting, but cherishing the memories good and bad, with our hearts from here on.

TAKE TIME TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF

Explore new interests, develop new, or revive old, hobbies, think about new and different opportunities.

Do something Fun:

Laughter helps us survive and re-enter life. Think about the funniest thing you can remember about your loved one. Think about the things you did that made your loved one laugh ~ and try it on with a trusted friend.

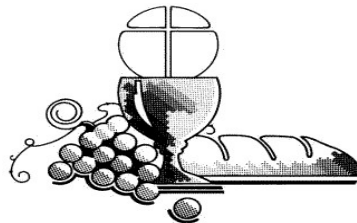
Give to others:

One of the best ways to overcome loneliness is to consider the needs of others, whether it be family, friend or stranger. Start small and let it grow as your feelings and energies expand.

LETTING GO AS WE HEAL

Letting go is an important turning point in the grief process. It does not mean you walk away from your loss or the memories of your loved one. It does mean that it is time to accept the loss, find healthy ways to incorporate the loss in your life and find the strength to move on to become a stronger person.

May Our Lady of Sorrows continue to comfort and heal you and protect you on your journey.



If you would like to participate in, or wish to know more about our grief support activities, please call the church office at **321 632 6333** or email us at **secretary@blessedsacramentcocoa.org**

Many thanks to the Bereavement staff of St Francis Hospice/Reflections Lifestage Care for sharing their grief support thoughts and information with us and for allowing us to offer it as part of Grief Support ministry.