

HORIZON

A PUBLICATION OF HOSPICE OF THE PIEDMONT • WINTER 2011

Living with loss

Finding Balance in the New Year

“And now let us welcome the new year, full of things that have never been.”

— Rainer Maria Rilke

At the start of the new year this quote, by poet Rainer Maria Rilke, pulls us into the world of the possible rather than the expected. It recognizes that our future holds both joys and sorrows that have never been. Rilke asks us to “welcome” the year 2011 – a challenging message if we have lost someone in the last year. Often the bereaved grieve the loss of a future meant to be spent with the deceased loved one. Someone shared in a recent support group, “How can I look forward to a new year without my loved one in it?”

What Rilke is suggesting is that we open ourselves to the world of possibility, the excitement of surprise, and the realization that there is balance in everything we do. None of us make

it through this world without a mixture of happiness and sadness as well as gains and losses. How we choose to see events in our lives makes all the difference.



Again, Rilke’s message may seem confusing because so much of the grieving process is spent in the past, reviewing the life of the precious ones lost and often resisting embracing a future without them. To find

peace with your loss you are not required to let go and forget your loved ones that have died. On the contrary, remember them, celebrate their lives. And in learning to keep them close in a way that works for you, you will discover how to live a life without them physically present in this world.

Grieving the loss of a loved one is exhausting and certain times of the year are more difficult than others. The key here is to seek balance. You have a past with a wealth of experience and invaluable memories. But an unknown future exists as well, full of possibilities. By allowing these two realities to coexist, the hope is that you will find yourself living a full life in the present.

Tips to Prepare for Your Grief Journey

Many bereavement professionals liken the grief process to a journey because it is a process over time with its ups and downs. Dr. Alan Wolfelt describes it as a journey through a wilderness in which people find their own unique paths. At times

the path is rugged and not easily navigated, requiring time and hard work. You might need a quiet and safe resting place for a time along the way. Usually individuals have their own unique pace, but sometimes others will join you on your journey. Some griever even stray

from the path for a time and feel lost, but most everyone finds the way back to their path which eventually leads out of the wilderness. Here are some tips for your grief journey:

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What can a bereavement counselor do for me?

Just about anyone can benefit from the bereavement services available at Hospice of the Piedmont. Many people believe that as they grieve, the best way to survive is to “stay strong,” or “hold it together.” But we know that, although grief is often a painful process, there are opportunities to do more than just survive. And a bereavement counselor can help you get there.

A bereavement counselor can help you:

- Understand that what you are going through is normal.
- Find your own unique path on the journey called grief.
- Accept in your heart as well as your mind that the death is real and final.
- Tell your unique story of grief and loss.
- Develop tools within yourself to cope.
- Find alternative ways to grieve other than talking, crying, sharing feelings.
- Remember your loved one, both the good and the bad.
- Explore what your loved one meant to you.
- Feel and express the feelings of grief, because prolonged avoidance of grief can be detrimental.
- Learn to live a full and happy life, while remaining connected with your loved one in a way that feels comfortable to you.
- Determine if you need professional support as you cope with your feelings of loss.

You don't have to do it alone.
Just pick up the phone and make
the call.
434.817.6900 or 800.975.5501

Tips to Prepare for Your Grief Journey *(continued from page 1)*

- **Pack lightly.** Your grief can be a heavy burden. You don't need to face everything all at once. Put down your excess baggage; it will be there to pick up when you are able and willing to do so.

- **Bring along a companion.** A supportive listener, a trusted friend, a clergyman, or a counselor can give you perspective about your journey.

- **Know that there will be some bumps and detours along the way.** A grief journey is never completely smooth, even though it may start out that way. Expect some rough terrain.

- **Find a navigator to guide you.** By reading books on grief, consulting with others who have been through it, or getting support from a bereavement counselor at the Hospice of the Piedmont or your local hospice, you will find the road less treacherous.

- **Bring along extra provisions.** Taking care of yourself with good nutrition, plenty of rest, and other

GRIEF JOURNEY TIPS

- Pack Lightly
- Bring a companion
- Expect detours
- Find a navigator
- Bring provisions
- Pause at rest stops
- Bring an umbrella

self-care practices will make your journey more bearable.

- **Pause at rest stops along the way.** If you have a support system of friends, relatives, or neighbors, now is the time to seek them out and open yourself up to their support.

- **Bring an umbrella.** Storms are inevitable. Your personal resources, including your religious or spiritual beliefs, can serve as your umbrella.

Adapted from San Diego Hospice and Palliative Care's Living With Loss Series

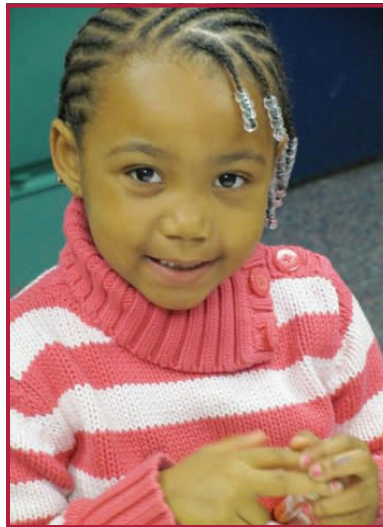


The Journeys Program for Children, Teens and their Families

Why Should I Consider Having My Child/Teen Involved in the Journeys Program?

Laurie Haan Bayma, MS, BSN, RN
Bereavement Coordinator/Counselor

Following the death of a loved one or friend, many children and teens have feelings, worries and even regrets that are difficult to share. For many children this may have been the first death of someone close to them. They may not have had the experience of dealing with strong feelings that are difficult to talk about. Many of our Journeys children and teens have shared with us that they did not want to bring up their own feelings and fears with family members who were already sad or upset. They have also shared with us that being with other children and teens was really helpful. As one child



shared, “When I looked around and saw the other children and

“When I looked around and saw the other children and teens that had lost someone, I felt . . . relieved . . . that I wasn’t alone.”

teens that had lost someone, I felt sad for them, but also relieved... that I wasn’t alone.”

both youth and adults to come to a group, especially the first couple of times, but they come because they realize it could really benefit them. Sometimes parents have to say, “We are doing this as a family, because we need this. We are doing it together.” While committing to attend a six-week group will require planning and may mean missing a few weeks of another activity, the tools that children, teens and adults learn are very valuable to them as they grow older, and the shared experience often brings family members closer. As one parent said, “Death is part of life...and I know my kids and I will use what we have learned again.”



Parents often are unsure about whether to sign a child/teen up for a group when they say they don’t need or want to attend. In fact, it is often difficult for



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*Dedicated to grief education, support,
and the offer of hope.*

Myth

Expressing tears
is a sign of
weakness.

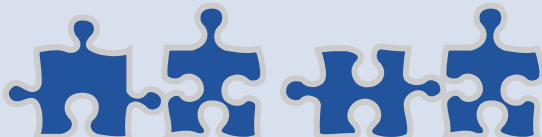


Reality

Tears are a normal expression of
grief and mourning.

“There is sacredness in tears. They are not
the mark of weakness, but of power. They
speak more eloquently than ten thousand
tongues. They are messengers of over-
whelming grief, of deep contrition
and of unspeakable love.”

-Washington Irving



Self-Care Tip

Bereaved individuals can benefit from grief education through reading or accessing grief support services locally at Hospice of the Piedmont. Most Hospices throughout the country offer bereavement support as a community service. Myths or misconceptions about the grief process have been unknowingly perpetuated for years. Experts believe that these misconceptions can create obstacles for grievers, making this already painful process even more difficult. The myths about grief can bring about unrealistic expectations for those who grieve and discourage the important task of outwardly expressing grief. In dispelling these myths we can create a more supportive environment for all who grieve. In each issue of *Horizon*, we address a myth in our “Myth/Reality” section.

