

# Bereavement Services

## Moving Forward, Not Moving On

**“When sorrows come, they come not single spies. But in battalions!”**

**– Hamlet (Act 4, Scene 5)**



When losing a loved one, everything changes in a moment. Our world comes to a sudden, screeching stop. We need a significant amount of time after our loved one's death as it is a monumental loss, but others may not need the same amount as the effects of the loss are not as pervasive. Recognizing that others are not grieving as we are can be painful. They might urge us to “move on” or “get over it.” While we are stuck in the storm of our grief, their world has gone on, and often they want us to move on with them.

Sometimes we're forced to return to “normal” life before we're ready. Loss brings monumental changes that are difficult to comprehend, and it can magnify just how much the world is continuing to

change around us. What once seemed simple and normal becomes more than we can bear. It might seem, as Shakespeare notes in the *Hamlet* quote above, that one sad event rarely comes alone, but rather, in a wave of multiple sad happenings. Our first inclination might be to freeze and fight against these changes and the changing world. You might feel that accepting the many changes in your life means letting go of your loved one permanently and severing your connection.

As much as we would love to stop time and live in the memory of the one we lost, we are incapable of doing so. Moving forward is part of life, and this does *not* mean we are leaving our loved one behind and letting them go. We remain connected to them through memories, shared experiences, mementos and even grief. Grief, despite the pain and sadness that come with it, is proof of your loved one's existence and impact on the world. *Moving forward* is not the same as *moving on* or *getting over it*. Moving forward means integrating your loss and memory of your loved one into your life. It means carrying the person's memory with you and sharing your loved one's legacy with the world through your life and activities. Those around you may not always honor your grief or remember or even know that you are mourning a loved one, but you can help them know your grief and bring your loved one to life by sharing them with the world. When we share them and their life through our actions, they spring to life, walking with us to face whatever battalions come our way.

### Activity Suggestions

- Recognize your own pace and needs within your grieving process. People may pressure you to do something you are not ready for, such as getting rid of things that belonged to your loved one. Don't be afraid to speak up if you aren't ready. This is your grief, and it is not theirs to manage.
- People sometimes tell us to “get over it” or “move on.” Often they are avoiding their own feelings or simply want to see you happy again. Acknowledge that they mean well but be honest about your feelings.
- Write or think about how you see your loved one in yourself or others, or think about the ways they positively impacted your life. Consider writing your loved one a letter to tell them about it.

## Control

**“The practice of love offers no place of safety. We risk loss, hurt, pain. We risk being acted upon by forces outside our control.” – bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions***

One of the most debilitating things about grief is how it reminds us that we lack control. The loss of a loved one is an ultimate and permanent change: someone has been removed from our lives before we are ready. Our relationships make up the essence of our self – who we are and how we make meaning of the world. They give us a sense of stability. When our loved one is gone, we lose our sense of self, our routines, our stability and our control. We do not have control over their death, and it is overwhelming how much we want to have them with us. When we attempt to grasp for control of things we cannot have, we get caught in a never-ending cycle of fear and loss.

In Act 3, Scene 4 of *Hamlet*, the mad prince tells his mother, “And do not spread compost on the weeds to make them ranker.” While he is speaking to her about trying to cover up her deceit, this quote also applies to our need for control. So many of the things we want to control in our life are weeds. They may look pretty on the outside, but they’re really just taking up space and resources. When we spread compost on them, we’re spending time and energy trying to grow or control something that doesn’t need our attention. If anything, these weeds should be plucked to make way for the grass and the flowers.

We lack control over our loss, but there is power in recognizing that we decide how we govern our own world. Acknowledging where you *do* have control can give you some power and peace in the midst of an uncontrollable situation. If you are at a store or social event and feel overwhelmed, allow yourself to leave; you can control whether or not you stay. Similarly, if you have friends who do not feel good to spend time with, give yourself time away from them. By claiming your power, you may make rich discoveries about your sense of self, your voice or the divine. Bear in mind that this might not happen overnight. Everyone moves at their own pace, and that is “okay.” Give yourself grace as you adjust to this monumental change. This might be one of the boldest and most powerful ways you can recognize your control in the face of loss.

### Activity Suggestions

- When faced with a situation that makes you feel anxious, ask yourself if you have any control over it.
- Find activities that give you control, like painting, knitting, or playing an instrument. In doing so, you have control over the activity and yourself in the moment.
- Make a list of the things you have control over: what is in your home, who you invite over, when and where you go, etc.

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### One-on-One Meetings

Meet individually with your bereavement coordinator to share the story of your loved one and how your loss has impacted you.

The location can be your house, our office, or at a neutral location such as a coffee shop.

### Support Groups

UnityPoint Hospice offers a number of different supports groups that address people’s unique loss and grieving style. A complete listing of our groups is provided on the enclosed flyer.

For more information, please contact one of the bereavement coordinators listed below.



**UnityPoint Hospice**