

Bereavement Services

“Only people who are capable of loving strongly can also suffer great sorrow, but this same necessity of loving serves to counteract their grief and heals them.”

– Leo Tolstoy

How Do I Do This? How Do I... Grieve?

“I don’t know how to get through this.” “I don’t know what I’m supposed to do.” I often hear these words from our families as they start to realize the magnitude of the loss they have just had. It seems insurmountable as they think about how different life will be now that their loved one is no longer physically present.

Here is my primary answer to anyone who wonders how they are supposed to grieve: *You aren’t supposed to know.* You really don’t know what the next couple of months, year, or several years are going to look like. When someone dies, we are facing life without them *for the first time.* If we knew exactly what to do without our loved ones, it would undermine the significance of our relationship with them.

However, there are two pieces of information that I would pass on to people about grieving. The first is that grieving is an ongoing process, and the grieving process will look different depending on the hour, day and year. Some days you might cry in the safety of your house. Other days, you might want to escape your grief and bury yourself in your work. Sometimes, you will want to be alone. Other times, you will want to be surrounded by family and friends. Grieving is an ongoing process of trying to understand what you need in order to continue to cope with the loss.

The second piece of information is that everyone grieves differently. Even people who are grieving the same person will not express their grief the same. Some people are more comfortable expressing their feelings through crying and talking. Other individuals find it more helpful to express their grief through tasks, such as taking care of paperwork or creating memorials. Everyone is grieving and coping in the way that feels best to them, and it will not be the same for everyone.

You might feel subtle pressure to grieve, feel or act a certain way. However, there is no right way to grieve. The only right way to grieve is to do what feels natural and authentic to you. Additionally, although your relationship with your deceased loved one is unique, there are many others who have thoughts, feelings and actions that are similar to you. Your relationship with your loved one is special, but you are not alone in your grief.



Activity Suggestions

- Allow yourself to cry
- Tell stories about your loved one
- Spend time alone
- Spend time with others
- Talk to your deceased loved one
- Pray
- Scream or groan in a safe space

The death of a loved one has a significant impact on our lives.

We cannot avoid experiencing the intense grief that we feel, but we can learn how to live with the changes that occur as a result of the loss.

UnityPoint Hospice Bereavement Services walks alongside you as you experience loss following the death of a loved one. Grief is not about getting over a loss; it is about the process of adjusting to the significant changes from the loss. We provide space for you to talk about your loved one and how his/her death impacts numerous aspects of your life.

How Long Will I Grieve?

“Everyone grieves in different ways. For some, it could take longer or shorter. I do know it never disappears. An ember still smolders inside me. Most days, I don’t notice it, but out of the blue, it’ll flare to life.”

– Maria V. Snyder, Storm Glass



People often ask me, “How long will this last? How long will I feel this way?”

My heart goes out to individuals when they ask this question because I can sense the depth of pain underneath the question. Losing loved ones, no matter what relationship you have had with them, is significantly difficult. Of course we desire to have the pain be over. Of course we long for the days when we were not grieving our losses, and our worlds felt more secure.

Unfortunately, I cannot answer this question for a couple of reasons. Every relationship and every individual is different, and so everyone is going to experience the pain of their loss differently. Additionally, I do not believe that we ever completely get over our grief. Grief is not merely an emotion; grief is a way of coping with the fact that we live in a world that constantly changes. Our loved ones die, and this results in shifts in identities, roles and dreams. Consequently, learning to live with change is an ongoing, daily process. What it means for you to have lost your loved one will be different after three months, as compared to after 10 years. The effect your loss has on your life will continue to evolve.

While I do believe that grief is a lifelong process of learning to live with the change of the loss, I do not think that the pain you experience will always be so intense. Indeed, the pain of your loss will feel different over various periods of your life. You will have the opportunity to feel joy and hope again. Continue to put one foot in front of the other; have some comfort in knowing that you have the strength to continue living.

Grief is painful and uncomfortable, and there is no other way to describe it. Experience your emotions whenever you feel that you are able. Many of us lead busy lives, but try and find spaces of time when you can acknowledge that you have experienced a significant loss. Cry and scream if you feel the urge. Allow yourself the space to think of your loved ones and what your relationship with him or her meant to you. Live into your grief and allow yourself to experience it so that it does not become buried deep within you. As you acknowledge what your grief is doing to you, your understanding and experience of it will evolve with the passage of time.

Activity Suggestion

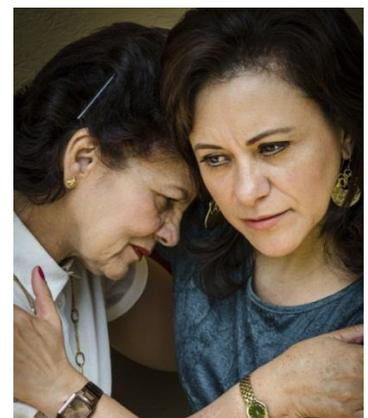
Write down your thoughts on a piece of paper, or type them onto your computer, iPad or phone. Writing the words is an effective way to express your thoughts and feelings. Eventually, if you would like, you can look back on your words and see how your thoughts and feelings have evolved. We often underestimate the depth to which we are growing and changing in our grief.

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 support 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.



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