

# Bereavement Services

## Patience

**“Grief is like the ocean; it comes in waves, ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim.”**

– Vicky Harrison

**“I’ve been through all the stages. Why am I not done grieving?”**

I’ve often heard this from people who have suffered a loss and feel as though they should be “finished” with their grief. In truth, understanding how our grief will flow and what it will look like is difficult to forecast.

I often tell people that grief is not something that is predictable, and *it’s not something that ever truly ends*. As humans, we like predictability and control. We want grief to follow a predictable pattern. If we can move on a straight trajectory from point A to point B, we can know there is an end in sight, and there will truly be a time when the pain of loss fades. Unfortunately, grief does not follow a flowchart. Instead, grief is like wading into the ocean. We first are tossed by the waves and struggling to gain our footing in the midst of the swells. We never know when the tide will go out or come in, and we never know when a tidal wave will knock us off our feet. Sometimes, we just wade in the surf. Wherever you are in your grief, remember that it changes in quality and does not follow any predictable path.

While the waves move in and out, remember to be patient.

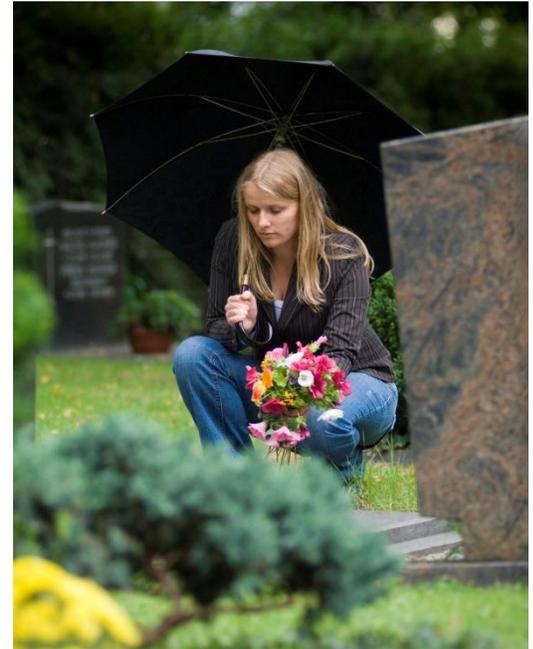
**Be patient with yourself:** your grief will change, and you will be changed by it. To further use the ocean analogy, remember to swim with the current, not against it.

**Be patient with others:** people might not understand why you are not “over it,” or they might claim that you are “grieving wrong.” Some relationships might change or even end. Explain that you are on your own trajectory and that your grief story is unique. Others might not grieve the way you do, they may be afraid of your pain, and they might not understand yet how it feels to lose someone.

**Be patient with your grief:** every loss is different, as our relationships with those who die are always unique. Even though you grieved one way in the past, you may grieve differently for a new loss.

## Activity Suggestions

- Instead of trying to tackle several things at once, allow yourself to set two or three (or maybe even one) goals for each day.
- Allow yourself to celebrate these accomplishments.
- Allow yourself to feel what you’re feeling in the moment, and don’t try to push yourself beyond what you feel ready for and comfortable with. Go at the pace that feels right.



## 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.

# Types and Styles of Grief: There's No One Way to Grieve

**“The shoe that fits one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases.”**

**– C.G. Jung**

**“Why am I not crying? Is there something wrong with me?”** I often hear this question from grieving individuals. The messages we receive from society and popular culture are that grief needs to be expressed through our emotions. While this is a healthy, normal way to grieve for some, not everyone grieves in the same way. Some people find that physical activity is a more meaningful expression of their grief.



Sometimes, this division of grief can be predicted by gender – women may grieve by actively processing the feelings associated with their emotions, while men grieve by translating their emotions into activity – but this is not always true. Additionally, a person might grieve each loss they experience in a different way. You could find yourself crying over one death and be drawn to physical expressions after another. Some people might find that they benefit from multiple styles of grief. *The important thing is to let both your body and mind guide you throughout the grieving process.*

Well-meaning individuals might try to tell you that you need to cry or express certain types of emotions if you are to grieve fully. The truth is that we express emotions in a variety of ways, so we don't necessarily need to cry or talk about our feelings in order to process them. If you enjoy running and can think about your loved one and your emotions while running, that might be the way you grieve.

What is most important about this type of grief is that you do not use activity as a distraction from your grief. Running *from* your grief never works; it always catches up to you eventually. But if you can run *with* your grief or find a way of expressing it that meets you where the joy of your heart lies, you might find yourself moving down a road of healing and peace. Allow your body and heart to guide you to what works best for you.

## Activity Suggestions

- Continue a tradition on a significant anniversary or holiday. If your father loved spice cake and you find baking therapeutic, bake one on his birthday to celebrate his life.
- Find an activity that gives you joy and do it in memory of your loved one. For instance, if you love to paint, create a piece of artwork in your loved one's honor. If you like running, find a local race and participate in their memory. As you work, think about that person and what they would have thought of it. Keep your creation or give it away.
- Write in a journal to or about your loved one. Consider drawing pictures or writing poetry.

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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 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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