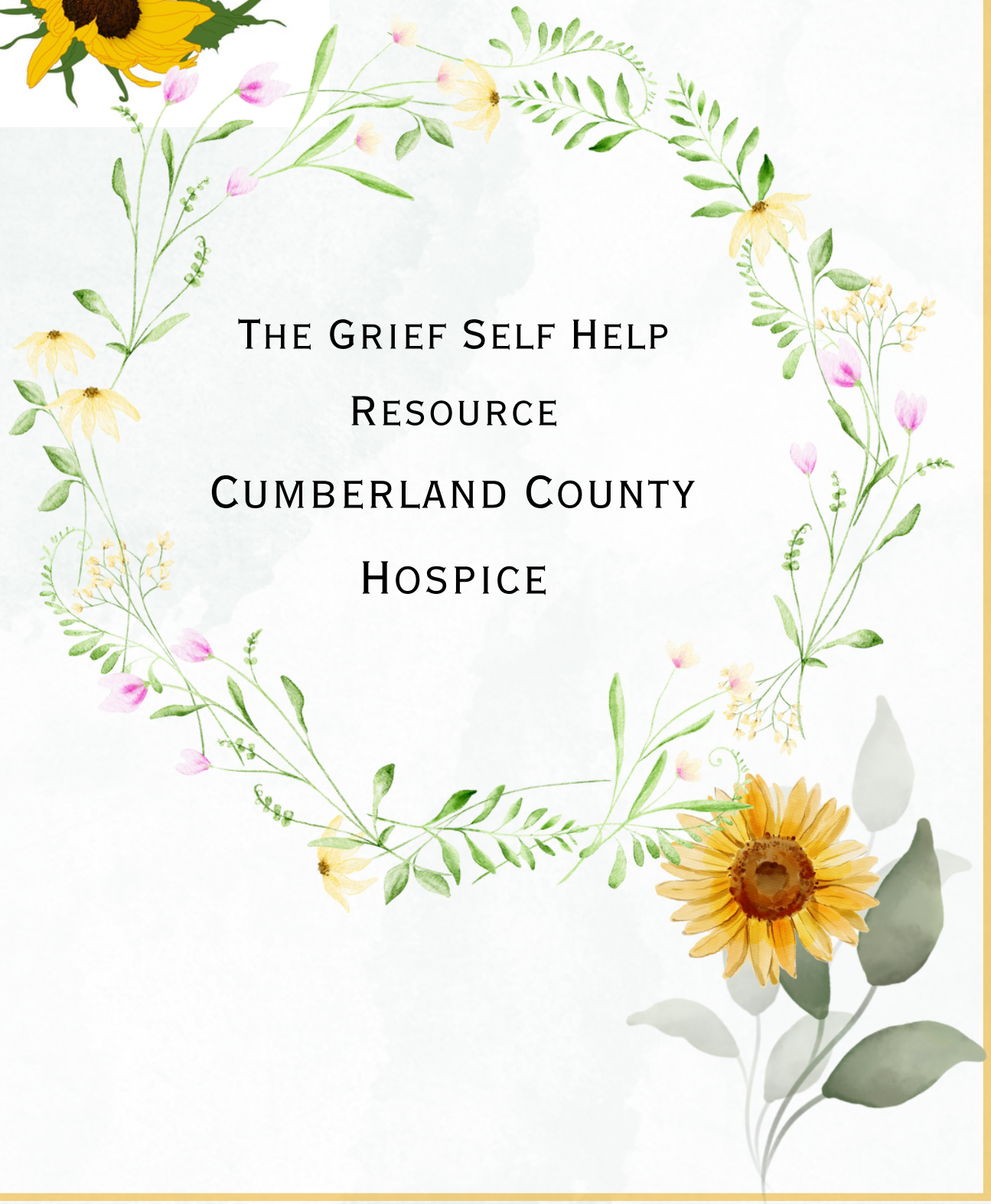




THE GRIEF SELF HELP
RESOURCE
CUMBERLAND COUNTY
HOSPICE



WHAT IS GRIEF?

GRIEF IS A NATURAL REACTION THAT COMES WHEN WE ARE FEELING LOSS. IT IS THE EXPRESSION OF YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS REGARDING THE LOSS OF SOMEONE YOU LOVE. ALL GRIEF IS UNIQUE, MEANING NO TWO PEOPLE WILL GRIEVE THE SAME WAY. YOUR GRIEF IS YOUR GRIEF, AND YOU ARE ENTITLED TO GRIEVE HOWEVER YOU NEED TO, FOR AS LONG AS YOU NEED TO.

WHEN YOU ARE GRIEVING, YOUR MIND IS TRYING TO UNDERSTAND DEATH. YOU MAY FIND YOURSELF THINKING ABOUT MEMORIES, THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE DEATH, PRACTICAL WORRIES, CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE, AND MORE.

YOU MIGHT BE HAVING A HARD TIME CONCENTRATING. ALL OF THESE THOUGHTS ARE A NATURAL PART OF YOUR GRIEF, TOO.

YOUR BODY EXPERIENCES GRIEF AS WELL. YOU MAY BE HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING. YOUR ENERGY LEVELS MAY BE LOW. MUSCLE ACHES AND PAIN, TIGHTNESS IN YOUR THROAT OR CHEST, HEADACHES, DIGESTION TROUBLES, AND HEART PALPITATIONS ARE ALSO COMMON.

FINALLY, YOU MAY BE BEHAVING DIFFERENTLY. YOU MIGHT BE CRYING, PACING, YELLING, OR ISOLATING YOURSELF. YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS MIGHT SEEM OUT OF CHARACTER.

“WHATEVER YOUR BEHAVIOR MAY BE RIGHT NOW, AS LONG AS YOU'RE NOT HURTING YOURSELF OR ANYONE ELSE, IT'S OK. IT'S A NORMAL AND NECESSARY PART OF YOUR GRIEF.”

- DR ALAN WOLFELT



COMPLICATED AND DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF

DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF TAKES PLACE WHEN THE GRIEVER FACES JUDGMENT FROM OTHERS FOR THEIR GRIEF. MOST OF THE TIME THIS IS CAUSED BY SOCIAL NORMS AND STIGMAS TOWARDS HOW THEY GRIEVE AND FOR WHOM.

SOMETIMES PEOPLE LOOKING AT THE MOURNER WILL NOT FULLY TAKE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO FOR WHAT IT REALLY IS, THIS IS WHERE SOCIAL STIGMA CAN COME INTO PLAY. WHERE SOME MAY SAY "HE WASN'T EVEN IN YOUR FAMILY" OR "SHE WAS JUST A FRIEND." THIS CAN ENCOURAGE THE MOURNER TO TRY TO "DIAL BACK" HIS OR HER GRIEF OR TRY TO GRIEVE IN SECRET WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE COMPLICATED GRIEF MAY HAVE PERSISTING SYMPTOMS. THESE SYMPTOMS CAN BECOME OVERWHELMING AND CAN BEGIN TO INFLUENCE YOUR DAILY LIFE. SOME COMMON FEELINGS OF COMPLICATED GRIEF INCLUDE:

- FEELINGS OF NUMBNESS AND DETACHMENT
 - INABILITY TO THINK ABOUT THE LOSS WITH ANY POSITIVE MEMORIES
 - INTENSE OR PERSISTENT LONGING FOR THE DECEASED PERSON
 - INTENSE SORROW OR PAIN BECAUSE OF THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE
 - AN INABILITY TO FOCUS ON ANYTHING BUT THE LOVED ONE'S DEATH
 - EXTREME FOCUS ON REMINDERS OF THE LOST ONE
- ONLY 7-10% OF BEREAVED PEOPLE WILL EXPERIENCE COMPLICATED GRIEF.

"THE REALITY IS THAT YOU WILL GRIEVE FOREVER. YOU WILL NOT "GET OVER" THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE; YOU WILL LEARN TO LIVE WITH IT. YOU WILL HEAL AND YOU WILL REBUILD YOURSELF AROUND THE LOSS YOU HAVE SUFFERED. YOU WILL BE WHOLE AGAIN BUT YOU WILL NEVER BE THE SAME. NOR SHOULD YOU BE THE SAME NOR WOULD YOU WANT TO."

- ELISABETH KUBLER-ROSS AND DAVID KESSLER



'ON THE DEATH OF THE BELOVED'

BY JOHN O'DONAHUE

THOUGH WE NEED TO WEEP YOUR LOSS,
YOU DWELL IN THAT SAFE PLACE IN OUR
HEARTS,
WHERE NO STORM OR NIGHT OR PAIN CAN
REACH
YOU
LET US NOT LOOK FOR YOU ONLY IN
MEMORY,
WHERE WE WOULD GROW LONELY
WITHOUT YOU.
YOU WOULD WANT US TO FIND YOU IN
PRESENCE,
BESIDE US WHEN BEAUTY BRIGHTENS,
WHEN KINDNESS GLOWS
AND MUSIC ECHOES ETERNAL TONES.





CARTOGRAPHY of GRIEF





SEVERAL COMMON MYTHS

BY ALAN D. WOLFELT (2011)

MYTH: "THE GOAL IS TO GET OVER YOUR GRIEF."

WE HAVE ALL HEARD PEOPLE ASK, "ARE YOU OVER IT YET?"

TO THINK THAT WE AS HUMAN BEINGS "GET OVER" GRIEF IS RIDICULOUS. WE NEVER "GET OVER" OUR GRIEF BUT INSTEAD WE RECONCILE WITH IT. WE DO NOT RESOLVE OR RECOVER FROM OUR GRIEF. THESE TERMS SUGGEST A TOTAL RETURN TO NORMALCY AND YET A PERSON IS FOREVER CHANGED BY THE EXPERIENCE OF GRIEF. FOR THE MOURNER TO ASSUME THAT LIFE WILL BE EXACTLY AS IT WAS PRIOR TO THE DEATH IS UNREALISTIC AND POTENTIALLY DAMAGING. THOSE PEOPLE WHO THINK THE GOAL IS TO RESOLVE GRIEF BECOME DESTRUCTIVE TO THE HEALING PROCESS. MOURNERS DO, HOWEVER, LEARN TO RECONCILE THEIR GRIEF. THEY LEARN TO INTEGRATE THE NEW REALITY OF MOVING FORWARD IN LIFE WITHOUT THE PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF THE PERSON WHO HAS DIED. WITH RECONCILIATION A RENEWED SENSE OF ENERGY AND CONFIDENCE, AN ABILITY TO FULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE REALITY OF DEATH, AND THE CAPACITY TO BECOME RE-INVOLVED WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF LIVING COMES BACK. ACKNOWLEDGING PAIN AND GRIEF ARE DIFFICULT, YET NECESSARY PARTS OF LIFE AND LIVING.





AS THE EXPERIENCE OF RECONCILIATION UNFOLDS, WE
RECOGNIZE THAT LIFE WILL BE DIFFERENT WITHOUT THE
PRESENCE OF THE PERSON WHO DIED. AT FIRST WE REALIZE
THIS WITH OUR HEAD,
AND LATER COME TO REALIZE IT WITH OUR HEART. WE ALSO
REALIZE THAT RECONCILIATION IS A
PROCESS, NOT AN EVENT. THE SENSE OF LOSS DOES NOT
COMPLETELY DISAPPEAR YET SOFTENS AND THE INTENSE
PANGS OF GRIEF BECOME LESS FREQUENT. HOPE FOR A
CONTINUED LIFE EMERGES AS WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE
COMMITMENTS TO THE FUTURE, REALIZING THAT THE PERSON
WHO DIED WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN, YET KNOWING THAT
ONE'S OWN LIFE CAN AND WILL MOVE FORWARD.





MYTH: THERE IS A PREDICTABLE AND ORDERLY PROGRESSION TO
THE EXPERIENCE OF GRIEF.

STAGE-LIKE THINKING ABOUT BOTH DYING AND GRIEF HAS BEEN APPEALING TO MANY PEOPLE. SOMEHOW THE "STAGES OF GRIEF" HAVE HELPED PEOPLE MAKE SENSE OUT OF AN EXPERIENCE THAT ISN'T AS ORDERLY AND PREDICTABLE AS WE WOULD LIKE IT TO BE. IF ONLY IT WERE SO SIMPLE!

THE CONCEPT OF THE "STAGES" WAS POPULARIZED IN 1969 WITH THE PUBLICATION OF ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS' LANDMARK TEXT:

ON DEATH AND DYING. KÜBLER-ROSS NEVER INTENDED FOR PEOPLE TO LITERALLY INTERPRET HER FIVE "STAGES OF DYING."

HOWEVER, MANY PEOPLE HAVE DONE JUST THAT, NOT ONLY WITH THE PROCESS OF DYING, BUT WITH THE PROCESSES OF BEREAVEMENT, GRIEF, AND MOURNING AS WELL.

ONE SUCH CONSEQUENCE IS WHEN PEOPLE AROUND THE GRIEVING PERSON BELIEVE THAT HE OR SHE SHOULD BE IN "STAGE 2" OR "STAGE 4" BY NOW. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. NOR CAN ITS DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS BE SO EASILY CATEGORIZED. WE ONLY GET OURSELVES IN TROUBLE WHEN WE TRY TO PRESCRIBE WHAT THE GRIEF AND MOURNING EXPERIENCES OF OTHERS SHOULD BE-OR WHEN WE TRY TO FIT OUR OWN GRIEF INTO NEAT LITTLE BOXES.



MYTH: TEARS EXPRESSING GRIEF ARE ONLY A SIGN OF WEAKNESS.

UNFORTUNATELY, MANY PEOPLE ASSOCIATE TEARS OF GRIEF WITH PERSONAL INADEQUACY AND WEAKNESS.

CRYING ON THE PART OF THE MOURNER OFTEN GENERATES FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS IN FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND CAREGIVERS. OUT OF A WISH TO PROTECT MOURNERS FROM PAIN, FRIENDS AND FAMILY MAY TRY TO STOP THE TEARS. COMMENTS SUCH AS, "TEARS WON'T BRING HIM BACK" AND "HE WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO CRY" DISCOURAGE THE EXPRESSION OF TEARS.

YET CRYING IS NATURE'S WAY OF RELEASING INTERNAL TENSION IN THE BODY AND ALLOWS THE MOURNER TO COMMUNICATE A NEED TO BE COMFORTED. CRYING MAKES PEOPLE FEEL BETTER, EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY. TEARS ARE NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. IN FACT, CRYING IS AN INDICATION OF THE GRIEVER'S WILLINGNESS TO DO THE "WORK OF MOURNING."





THE SIX NEEDS OF MOURNING

BY ALAN D. WOLFELT, PH.D.

THE DEATH OF SOMEONE LOVED CHANGES OUR LIVES FOREVER, AND THE MOVEMENT FROM THE "BEFORE" TO THE "AFTER" IS ALMOST ALWAYS A LONG, PAINFUL JOURNEY. FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCES WITH LOSS AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE THOUSANDS OF GRIEVING PEOPLE I HAVE WORKED WITH OVER THE YEARS, I HAVE LEARNED THAT IF WE ARE TO HEAL WE CANNOT SKIRT THE OUTSIDE EDGES OF OUR GRIEF. INSTEAD, WE MUST JOURNEY THROUGH IT, SOMETIMES MEANDERING THE SIDE ROADS, SOMETIMES PLOWING DIRECTLY INTO ITS DEEP CENTER.

I HAVE ALSO LEARNED THAT THE JOURNEY REQUIRES MOURNING. THERE IS AN IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE, YOU SEE. GRIEF IS WHAT YOU THINK AND FEEL ON THE INSIDE AFTER SOMEONE YOU LOVE DIES. MOURNING IS THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF THOSE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. TO MOURN IS TO BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN OUR GRIEF JOURNEYS. WE ALL GRIEVE WHEN SOMEONE WE LOVE DIES, BUT IF WE ARE TO HEAL, WE MUST ALSO MOURN.

THERE ARE SIX YIELD SIGNS YOU ARE LIKELY TO ENCOUNTER ON YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF-WHAT I CALL THE "RECONCILIATION NEEDS OF MOURNING." FOR WHILE YOUR GRIEF JOURNEY WILL BE AN INTENSELY PERSONAL, UNIQUE EXPERIENCE, ALL MOURNERS MUST YIELD TO THIS SET OF BASIC HUMAN NEEDS IF THEY ARE TO HEAL.





NEED 1: ACKNOWLEDGING THE REALITY OF DEATH.

THE FIRST NEED OF MOURNING INVOLVES GENTLY CONFRONTING THE REALITY THAT SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT WILL NEVER PHYSICALLY COME BACK INTO YOUR LIFE AGAIN.

WHETHER THE DEATH WAS SUDDEN OR ANTICIPATED, ACKNOWLEDGING THE FULL REALITY OF THE LOSS MAY OCCUR OVER WEEKS AND MONTHS. TO SURVIVE, YOU MAY TRY TO PUSH AWAY THE REALITY OF THE DEATH AT TIMES. YOU MAY DISCOVER YOURSELF REPLAYING EVENTS SURROUNDING THE DEATH AND CONFRONTING MEMORIES, BOTH GOOD AND BAD. THIS REPLAY IS A VITAL PART OF THIS NEED OF MOURNING. IT'S AS IF EACH TIME YOU TALK IT OUT, THE EVENT IS A LITTLE MORE REAL.

REMEMBER-THIS FIRST NEED OF MOURNING, LIKE THE OTHER FIVE THAT FOLLOW, MAY INTERMITTENTLY REQUIRE YOUR ATTENTION FOR MONTHS. BE PATIENT AND COMPASSIONATE WITH YOURSELF AS YOU WORK ON EACH OF THEM.

"GRIEF IS NOT A DISORDER, A DISEASE OR A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. IT IS AN EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, AND SPIRITUAL NECESSITY, THE PRICE YOU PAY FOR LOVE. THE ONLY CURE FOR GRIEF IS TO GRIEVE."

- EARL GROLLMAN





NEED 2: EMBRACING THE PAIN OF THE LOSS.

THIS NEED OF MOURNING REQUIRES US TO EMBRACE THE PAIN OF OUR LOSS-SOMETHING WE NATURALLY DON'T WANT TO DO. IT IS EASIER TO AVOID, REPRESS OR DENY THE PAIN OF GRIEF THAN IT IS TO CONFRONT IT, YET IT IS IN CONFRONTING OUR PAIN THAT WE LEARN TO RECONCILE OURSELVES TO IT.

YOU WILL PROBABLY DISCOVER THAT YOU NEED TO "DOSE" YOURSELF IN EMBRACING YOUR PAIN. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU CANNOT (NOR SHOULD YOU TRY TO) OVERLOAD YOURSELF WITH THE HURT ALL AT ONE TIME. SOMETIMES YOU MAY NEED TO DISTRACT YOURSELF FROM THE PAIN OF DEATH, WHILE AT OTHER TIMES YOU WILL NEED TO CREATE A SAFE PLACE TO MOVE TOWARD IT.

UNFORTUNATELY, OUR CULTURE TENDS TO ENCOURAGE THE DENIAL OF PAIN. IF YOU OPENLY EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS OF GRIEF, MISINFORMED FRIENDS MAY ADVISE YOU TO "CARRY ON" OR "KEEP YOUR CHIN UP." IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU REMAIN "STRONG" AND "IN CONTROL," YOU MAY BE CONGRATULATED FOR "DOING WELL" WITH YOUR GRIEF. DOING WELL WITH YOUR GRIEF MEANS BECOMING WELL ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR PAIN.






NEED 3: REMEMBERING THE PERSON WHO PASSED.

DO YOU HAVE ANY KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE WHEN THEY DIE? OF COURSE. YOU HAVE A RELATIONSHIP OF MEMORY. PRECIOUS MEMORIES, DREAMS REFLECTING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP AND OBJECTS THAT LINK YOU TO THE PERSON WHO DIED (SUCH AS PHOTOS, SOUVENIRS ETC.) ARE EXAMPLES OF SOME OF THE THINGS THAT GIVE TESTIMONY TO A DIFFERENT FORM OF A CONTINUED RELATIONSHIP. THIS NEED FOR MOURNING INVOLVES ALLOWING AND ENCOURAGING YOURSELF TO PURSUE THIS RELATIONSHIP.

SOME PEOPLE MAY TRY TO TAKE YOUR MEMORIES AWAY. TRYING TO BE HELPFUL, THEY ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE DOWN ALL THE PHOTOS OF THE PERSON WHO DIED. THEY TELL YOU TO KEEP BUSY OR EVEN TO MOVE OUT OF YOUR HOUSE. BUT IN A LOT OF WAYS, REMEMBERING THE PAST MAKES HOPING FOR THE FUTURE POSSIBLE. YOUR FUTURE WILL BECOME OPEN TO NEW EXPERIENCES ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT YOU EMBRACE THE PAST.





NEED 4: DEVELOPING A NEW SELF-IDENTITY.


PART OF YOUR SELF-IDENTITY COMES FROM THE RELATIONSHIPS YOU HAVE WITH OTHER PEOPLE. WHEN SOMEONE WITH WHOM YOU HAVE A RELATIONSHIP DIES, YOUR SELF-IDENTITY, OR THE WAY YOU SEE YOURSELF, NATURALLY CHANGES.

YOU MAY HAVE GONE FROM BEING A "WIFE" OR "HUSBAND" TO A "WIDOW" OR "WIDOWER." YOU MAY HAVE GONE FROM BEING A "PARENT" TO A "BEREAVED PARENT." THE WAY YOU DEFINE YOURSELF AND THE WAY SOCIETY DEFINES YOU HAS CHANGED.

A DEATH OFTEN REQUIRES YOU TO TAKE ON NEW ROLES THAT HAD BEEN FILLED BY THE PERSON WHO DIED. AFTER ALL, SOMEONE STILL HAS TO TAKE OUT THE GARBAGE; SOMEONE STILL HAS TO BUY THE GROCERIES. YOU CONFRONT YOUR CHANGED IDENTITY EVERY TIME YOU DO SOMETHING THAT USED TO BE DONE BY THE PERSON WHO DIED. THIS CAN BE VERY HARD WORK AND CAN LEAVE YOU FEELING VERY DRAINED.

YOU MAY OCCASIONALLY FEEL CHILD-LIKE AS YOU STRUGGLE WITH YOUR CHANGING IDENTITY. YOU MAY FEEL A TEMPORARILY HEIGHTENED DEPENDENCE ON OTHERS AS WELL AS FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS, FRUSTRATION, INADEQUACY AND FEAR.

MANY PEOPLE DISCOVER THAT AS THEY WORK ON THIS NEED, THEY ULTIMATELY DISCOVER SOME POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THEIR CHANGED SELF-IDENTITY. YOU MAY DEVELOP A RENEWED CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF, FOR EXAMPLE. YOU MAY DEVELOP A MORE CARING, KIND AND SENSITIVE PART OF YOURSELF. YOU MAY DEVELOP AN ASSERTIVE PART OF YOUR IDENTITY THAT EMPOWERS YOU TO GO ON LIVING EVEN THOUGH YOU CONTINUE TO FEEL A SENSE OF LOSS.





NEED 5: SEARCHING FOR MEANING.


WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE DIES, YOU NATURALLY QUESTION THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF LIFE. YOU PROBABLY WILL QUESTION YOUR PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE AND EXPLORE RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL VALUES AS YOU WORK ON THIS NEED. YOU MAY DISCOVER YOURSELF SEARCHING FOR MEANING IN YOUR CONTINUED LIVING AS YOU ASK

"HOW?" AND "WHY" QUESTIONS.

"HOW COULD GOD LET THIS HAPPEN?" "WHY DID THIS HAPPEN NOW, IN THIS WAY?" DEATH REMINDS YOU OF YOUR LACK OF CONTROL. IT CAN LEAVE YOU FEELING POWERLESS.

THE PERSON WHO DIED WAS A PART OF YOU. THIS DEATH MEANS YOU MOURN A LOSS NOT ONLY OUTSIDE OF YOURSELF, BUT INSIDE OF YOURSELF AS WELL. AT TIMES, OVERWHELMING SADNESS AND LONELINESS MAY BE YOUR CONSTANT COMPANIONS. YOU MAY FEEL THAT WHEN THIS PERSON DIED, PART OF YOU DIED WITH HIM OR HER. AND NOW YOU ARE FACED WITH FINDING SOME MEANING IN GOING ON WITH YOUR LIFE EVEN THOUGH YOU MAY OFTEN FEEL SO EMPTY.

THIS DEATH ALSO CALLS FOR YOU TO CONFRONT YOUR OWN SPIRITUALITY. YOU MAY DOUBT YOUR FAITH AND HAVE SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS AND QUESTIONS RACING THROUGH YOUR HEAD AND HEART. THIS IS A NORMAL PART OF YOUR JOURNEY TOWARD RENEWED LIVING.





NEED 6: RECEIVING ONGOING SUPPORT FROM OTHERS.

THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF UNDERSTANDING SUPPORT YOU GET DURING YOUR GRIEF JOURNEY WILL HAVE A MAJOR INFLUENCE ON YOUR CAPACITY TO HEAL. YOU CANNOT-NOR SHOULD YOU TRY TO-DO THIS ALONE. DRAWING ON THE EXPERIENCES AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF FRIENDS, FELLOW MOURNERS OR PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS IS NOT A WEAKNESS BUT A HEALTHY HUMAN NEED. SINCE MOURNING IS A PROCESS THAT TAKES PLACE OVER TIME, THIS SUPPORT MUST BE AVAILABLE MONTHS AND EVEN YEARS AFTER THE DEATH OF SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE.

UNFORTUNATELY, BECAUSE OUR SOCIETY PLACES SO MUCH VALUE ON THE ABILITY TO "CARRY ON," "KEEP YOUR CHIN UP" AND "KEEP BUSY," MANY MOURNERS ARE ABANDONED SHORTLY AFTER THE EVENT OF THE DEATH. "IT'S OVER AND DONE WITH" AND "IT'S TIME TO GET ON WITH YOUR LIFE" ARE THE TYPES OF MESSAGES DIRECTED AT MOURNERS THAT STILL DOMINATE. OBVIOUSLY, THESE MESSAGES ENCOURAGE YOU TO DENY OR REPRESS YOUR GRIEF RATHER THAN EXPRESS IT.

TO BE TRULY HELPFUL, THE PEOPLE IN YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM MUST APPRECIATE THE IMPACT THIS DEATH HAS HAD ON YOU. THEY MUST UNDERSTAND THAT IN ORDER TO HEAL, YOU MUST BE ALLOWED-EVEN ENCOURAGED TO MOURN LONG AFTER THE DEATH. AND THEY MUST ENCOURAGE YOU TO SEE MOURNING NOT AS AN ENEMY TO BE VANQUISHED BUT AS A NECESSITY TO BE EXPERIENCED AS A RESULT OF HAVING LOVED.





RECONCILING YOUR GRIEF

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD-INDEED YOU MAY BELIEVE-THAT YOUR GRIEF JOURNEY'S END WILL COME WHEN YOU RESOLVE, OR RECOVER FROM, YOUR GRIEF. BUT YOUR JOURNEY WILL NEVER END. PEOPLE DO NOT "GET OVER" GRIEF.

RECONCILIATION IS A MORE APPROPRIATE TERM FOR WHAT OCCURS AS THE MOURNER WORKS TO INTEGRATE THE NEW REALITY OF MOVING FORWARD IN LIFE WITHOUT THE PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF THE PERSON WHO DIED. WITH RECONCILIATION COMES A RENEWED SENSE OF ENERGY AND CONFIDENCE, AN ABILITY TO FULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE REALITY OF THE DEATH AND A CAPACITY TO BECOME REINVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITIES OF LIVING. IN RECONCILIATION, THE SHARP, EVER-PRESENT PAIN OF GRIEF GIVES RISE TO A RENEWED SENSE OF MEANING AND PURPOSE. YOUR FEELINGS OF LOSS WILL NOT COMPLETELY DISAPPEAR, YET THEY WILL SOFTEN, AND THE INTENSE PANGS OF GRIEF WILL BECOME LESS FREQUENT. HOPE FOR A CONTINUED LIFE WILL EMERGE AS YOU ARE ABLE TO MAKE COMMITMENTS TO THE FUTURE, REALIZING THAT THE PERSON WHO DIED WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN, YET KNOWING THAT YOUR LIFE CAN AND WILL MOVE FORWARD.

"THERE IS A SACREDNESS IN TEARS. THEY ARE NOT A MARK OF WEAKNESS, BUT OF POWER. THEY SPEAK MORE ELOQUENTLY THAN TEN THOUSAND TONGUES. THEY ARE THE MESSENGERS OF OVERWHELMING GRIEF, OF DEEP CONTRITION AND OF UNSPEAKABLE

LOVE.

- WASHINGTON IRVING



GETTING SUPPORT WHILE GRIEVING



AS YOU ARE GRIEVING, SEEK OUT THE HELP OF PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE WHO ARE NATURALLY GOOD HELPERS. A FEW SOLID SHOULDERS TO LEAN ON CAN REALLY HELP THROUGHOUT THE GRIEVING PROCESS. SHARING YOUR PAIN WITH OTHERS WON'T MAKE IT DISAPPEAR BUT IT WILL, OVER TIME, MAKE IT MORE BEARABLE. REACHING OUT FOR HELP ALSO CONNECTS YOU TO OTHER PEOPLE AND STRENGTHENS THE BONDS OF LOVE THAT MAKE LIFE SEEM WORTH LIVING.

DR. ALAN WOLFELT SPOKE ABOUT GETTING SUPPORT IN GRIEF: “WHEN YOU ARE GRIEVING, YOU NEED THE SUPPORT OF PEOPLE WHO WILL WALK BESIDE YOU. YOU DO NOT NEED PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WALK IN FRONT OF YOU AND LEAD YOU DOWN THE PATH THAT THEY THINK IS RIGHT. NOR DO YOU NEED PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WALK BEHIND YOU SO THAT THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE PRESENT TO YOUR PAIN.”

“INSTEAD, YOU NEED AND DESERVE THE COMPANIONSHIP OF PEOPLE WHO WILL COME ALONGSIDE YOU AND LET YOU EXPRESS WHATEVER YOU ARE THINKING AND FEELING. THEIR ROLE IS NOT TO TRY AND “FIX IT” OR GIVE YOU UNWANTED ADVICE. THEIR ROLE IS TO BE THERE, ACTIVELY LISTEN, AND OFFER THEIR LOVE AND PRESENCE.”



GETTING SUPPORT WHILE GRIEVING



SHARING YOUR INNER THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS OF GRIEF WITH COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS IS ONE ESSENTIAL STEP TOWARD HEALING. TALKING ABOUT YOUR GRIEF WILL HELP. TURN TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS YOU KNOW TO HAVE GOOD INTERPERSONAL SKILLS. NOT EVERYONE IS EQUIPPED TO BE A HELPER IN GRIEF, BUT MANY ARE. IF YOU ENCOUNTER PEOPLE WHO TRY TO JUDGE YOU, SHAME YOU, OR SILENCE YOUR GRIEF, IGNORE THEM AND INSTEAD REACH OUT TO OTHERS. ONE OR TWO GOOD LISTENERS MAY BE ALL YOU NEED.

DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT ACCEPTING THE HELP OF OTHERS RIGHT NOW, EITHER. IF PEOPLE WANT TO COOK FOR YOU, RUN ERRANDS, DO CHORES, OR SIMPLY BE NEAR YOU WHILE YOU REST AND WITHDRAW, THEY ARE GIVING YOU A GREAT GIFT. LEARN TO ACCEPT THEIR KINDNESS WITH GRATITUDE. YOU WILL NEED THEIR SUPPORT, NOW AND ALWAYS.



WHEN TO SEE A PROFESSIONAL FOR GRIEF



AS WE GO THROUGH GRIEF, IT IS SOMETIMES EASY TO MISS THE SIGNS TELLING US WE NEED TO SEEK OUT HELP. WHETHER YOU ARE CONSIDERING GETTING HELP FOR YOURSELF OR A FRIEND THAT SEEMS TO BE STRUGGLING AFTER THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE, CONSIDER THESE POINTS TO SEE HOW MANY YOU CAN RELATE TO.

INABILITY TO STOP CRYING - THIS IS CERTAINLY ONE OF THE MOST APPARENT TRAITS THAT FRIENDS CAN SEE, UNDERSTANDING YOU'RE STILL OVERCOME WITH SADNESS.

SIGNIFICANT WEIGHT LOSS - WEIGHT LOSS COULD MEAN THE PERSON IS NOT EATING AND GETTING PROPER NUTRITION AND THEIR BODY IS BURNING OFF STORED CALORIES. THIS IS DANGEROUS BECAUSE IT COULD LEAD TO OTHER HEALTH ISSUES.

INABILITY TO CONCENTRATE - MOVING ON MEANS BEING ABLE TO COMPARTMENTALIZE YOUR MOMENTS OF GRIEF. YOU'LL ALWAYS FEEL SAD ABOUT YOUR LOSS AND MISS YOUR LOVED ONE, BUT YOU ARE STILL ALIVE, AND YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO CHOOSE WHEN TO THINK ABOUT THEM.





WHEN TO SEE A PROFESSIONAL FOR GRIEF, CONT.

AS WE GO THROUGH GRIEF, IT IS SOMETIMES EASY TO MISS THE SIGNS TELLING US WE NEED TO SEEK OUT HELP. WHETHER YOU ARE CONSIDERING GETTING HELP FOR YOURSELF OR A FRIEND THAT SEEMS TO BE STRUGGLING AFTER THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE, CONSIDER THESE POINTS TO SEE HOW MANY YOU CAN RELATE TO.

CHANGE IN SLEEPING PATTERNS - YOU'RE EVENTUALLY GOING TO BE ABLE TO SLEEP, EVEN IF IT'S AFTER CRYING YOURSELF TO SLEEP. BUT IF YOU FIND YOURSELF SLEEPING DURING THE DAY AND STAYING AWAKE ALL NIGHT, THAT'S A SIGN YOUR MIND IS STRUGGLING TO HANDLE THIS ON ITS OWN.

HAVING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR THOUGHTS OF HURTING YOURSELF - WITHOUT QUESTION, THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT, AS SOME PEOPLE REASON THEY CAN'T GO ON LIVING WITHOUT THEIR LOVED ONE. RATIONAL THOUGHT, THOUGH, WOULD HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR LOVED ONE WOULD NEVER WISH THEM TO DO THAT, AND THEY'D WANT THEM TO CONTINUE LIVING.

UNCONTROLLABLE RAGE - AFTER THE INITIAL MOMENTS OF LOSING A LOVED ONE, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO LESSEN OUR ANGER TOWARD THE LOSS AS TIME GOES BY. UNCONTROLLABLE RAGE WILL JUST OPEN

UP OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE TROUBLE, SO COUNSELING IS DEFINITELY NEEDED.

OTHERS HAVE MENTIONED YOU NEED GRIEF COUNSELING - IF OTHER PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY BROUGHT THIS SUBJECT UP, THEN THEY'RE SEEING SOME SIGNALS THAT A PROFESSIONAL THERAPIST MIGHT BE NECESSARY TO HELP YOU MOVE ON.

"GRIEF IS LIKE THE OCEAN, IT COMES ON WAVES EBBING AND FLOWING, SOMETIMES THE WATER IS CALM, AND SOMETIMES IT IS OVERWHELMING. ALL WE CAN DO IS LEARN TO SWIM."

- VICKI HARRISON

