



Grief and Loss Newsletter



Summer Edition

Taking a Break from the Work of Grief

The work of grief is hard emotional work. When grieving, you may experience a wide range of emotions. Below are a few suggestions for how to take a break from the hard work of grief:

- Care for your physical health. Eat a balanced diet, sleep well and exercise.
- Learn one way to relax – through meditation, music, massage, imagery, prayer, etc.
- One day at a time! Avoid making many changes at one time and avoid big decisions if you can. Sometimes it's enough to manage the day or even the moment.
- Reach out to others. Mourning is the process of sharing grief with others and is important to the healing process. Talking can be emotional “medicine.”
- Give yourself permission to feel whatever you are feeling. There are no “wrong” or “bad” feelings. Write about them in a journal if they are too big to share.
- Do things that feel GOOD! Have fun when you can. Surround yourself with small

pleasures, such as pleasant smells, colors, sounds and touches.

- Say “no” when you need to. Know your limitations and regain a sense of control over your daily life and time, even as everything else may seem out of control right now.
- Tell people what you need or do not need from them. People sometimes say and do things that are unintentionally hurtful. You know best what is helpful to you.
- Use positive “self-talk” to remind yourself that you will survive, you’re in grief (not going crazy) and your sadness will not be forever.

If you have any questions or concerns about what you are experiencing, please contact your grief counselor or other medical professional.

Harry Hynes Hospice is available to help with grief and loss counseling. You may sign up at hynesthospice.org under the Grief and Loss category or call (316) 265-9441.

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“At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer, we remember them.”
- Sylvan Kamens & Rabbi Jack Reimer

Understanding Children and Grief

Death is a real part of a child’s life. Even a very young child has seen a dead animal or insect. They may have watched Mufasa fall to his death in the movie *The Lion King* or watched the movie *Frozen* and learned that Anna and Elsa’s parent’s have died. All children grieve but there are important distinctions between the grief of a child versus the grief of an adult.

Immature cognitive development

Children’s immature cognitive development limits their understanding of death. Generally, a child needs to be about ten or eleven before the abstract nature of death can be fully understood. For example, death should not be referred to as a person sleeping because a young child might believe they would wake up in the morning.

Ability to tolerate sadness

Children have a limited ability to tolerate emotional pain. They may express sadness one minute and then the next minute are ready to play. Play is a way to escape the pain of all the confusing feelings they are experiencing. Adults sometimes misinterpret this behavior as not feeling the loss as deeply as they are.

Ability to verbalize feelings

The ability to talk about how they feel is limited and talking about feelings may be avoided. Grief may be expressed more by changes in behavior.

Reactions may include depression, low energy level, anger, fear, disorganization, low self-esteem, hyperactivity, aggression, and regression. Parents and other significant adults can help children learn to identify their feelings. Children need to be given a honest explanation of the death in words they can understand.

Sensitive about being different from other children

The peer group is very important to a school aged child. Children who have experienced the death of a close family member may not want to be seen as being different. Friends may be uncomfortable talking to a peer who is grieving.

The biggest hurdle for adults in talking with children is their own uncomfortableness or uncertainty about death. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross says, “You cannot be a phony-baloney” with children. Children may interpret adult uncomfortableness as meaning that talking and feeling is not okay. They may fill in the gaps in their understanding of what has occurred with their own interpretation.

How children learn to deal with death will impact their ability to deal with loss for the rest of their lives. If you are concerned about your children or grandchildren, ask your grief counselor or other medical professional.

Are You Grieving or Depressed?

Sometimes when you are grieving it may be difficult to determine if you are grieving only, or experiencing depression as well.

John M. Schneider Ph.D. (author of Finding My Way and Transforming Loss) has identified key differences between grief and depression.

You Are Grieving When You are Experiencing the following:

- Sometimes find yourself obsessed with thinking about the person who died, but at other times are able to think of other things
- Experience vivid, clear dreams, which can be very comforting
- May have gained or lost weight
- Exercise often or not at all
- Find getting to sleep difficult
- Feel tired frequently
- Have a connection to something greater than yourself
- Are able to have pleasurable experiences as long as it isn't something that only came from the person who died
- Like to have close friends or someone who will listen to your story
- Miss being loved or the ability to love others

You may be Depressed When:

- Are often obsessed with yourself and how the death is unfair or see it as a punishment
- Experience flashbacks, nightmares, or the same disturbing dreams over and over
- Have had extreme weight change
- Experience difficulty waking up and then awoken with disturbing dreams
- Find yourself always restless or sleepy
- Are unable to find meaning and have an ongoing focus on "why me" and the unfairness of the death
- Tend to discard previously held beliefs
- Cry all the time or not at all or are angry all the time or not at all
- Rarely feel good
- Can't stand being with people or can't be without them
- Feel abandoned and unloved when alone
- Have had an extreme reaction to "eat, drink and be merry" or have experienced no pleasure at all
- Feel unloved and incapable of loving
- Distance yourself from others

If you have any questions or concerns about what you are experiencing, please contact your grief counselor or other medical professional.



Grief Support

Harry Hynes Memorial Hospice offers grief support for families and caregivers of those we have served and to the community at large. Our bereavement staff supports people in finding healing, growth, and renewed hope for living. We want to provide support to you in a manner that is comfortable for you.

Services we currently have available include:

Rising Sun

A quarterly grief and loss newsletter with articles about common experiences and helpful ways to cope. A calendar listing special events and bereavement groups is included. Newsletters can be mailed electronically, by postal service, or viewed on our website at hynesthospice.org.

Grief Support Groups

Support groups where you can find help and healing for the hurt of losing a loved one.

Grief & Loss Counseling

Counseling that focuses on adjusting to the death of a loved one.

Grief Support is available to anyone regardless of if Harry Hynes Hospice served their loved one. Memorials, contributions, and grants help fund the Grief Services we offer.

For more information contact the Harry Hynes Hospice Bereavement Department at (316) 265-9441 or (800) 767-4965 or visit hynesthospice.org/grief-and-loss-support/.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

313 S Market
Wichita KS 67202

