



Winter Edition

New Beginnings

You are faced with the challenge of doing some things differently since the death of your loved one. Yet it can be very hard to even know how or where to begin. C.S. Lewis begins his book *A Grief Observed* by saying, “No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear.” Sometimes fear of not being able to deal with the changes can keep us stuck.

You may:

- Fear the future will not be any better than today
- Fear the unknown
- Fear how you will survive as a single person in a couple’s world
- Fear other people you love will also die or fear your own death
- Fear that if you allow yourself to cry, you won’t be able to stop
- Fear that you will not make the right decisions

You may also be able to think of other fears. When fear is in control, we are stuck. Robert Frost believes the best way out of fear is through it. The first step is to become involved with life. One option is to talk with others who experience fear but are trying to not allow fear to take over. Fear can be a sign of unresolved grief.

If you find yourself struggling with fear, contact your grief counselor. Dealing with fear is a normal part of processing grief and enables you to take steps towards a new hope.

Alcohol Use During Grief

Alcohol use for some individuals increases after the death of a loved one. Several factors illustrate why this increase occurs. Generally, in our American culture statistics show that people will do whatever it takes to avoid pain. The avoidance of pain is one of the primary reasons for alcohol addiction.

For many, alcohol is socially acceptable to use. It is legal and easy to obtain, and initially seems effective in reducing pain. Because it is socially acceptable, and because of the pain due to the loss of a loved one, friends and family may find it harder to ask about a person's drinking.

Some individuals may feel as though they deserve to drink excessively. They may feel that they have a big void in their life, and they have a right to comfort themselves.

They may also think that the feelings they are experiencing are difficult to tolerate and they want to get rid of them quickly. For some people, increased alcohol use has become a way to protect oneself.

What are the effects of alcohol? Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. It depresses the areas of the brain that are used in complex and rational thinking, and voluntary control of behavior. Over extended periods alcohol can cause cardiac arrest and cirrhosis.

If individuals feel depressed before the use of alcohol, they may initially receive a kind of "self-medication" relief while drinking. This feeling is short-lived, and always leads to greater feelings of depression when alcohol is not used. The cycle of use: feel better – depression – repeat alcohol use, begins. Prolonged use and alcoholism will lead to longer periods of depression making the cycle even harder to break. Alcohol gives a false sense of mastery and control. Increased alcohol use interrupts the mourning process.

Harry Hynes Hospice is available to help with grief and loss counseling. To contact a grief counselor, visit hynesmemorial.org under Care Services / Grief and Loss Support tab, or call (316) 265-9441.



"Journey one day at a time. Don't try to solve all the problems of your life at once. Each day's survival is a triumph"
- Earl A. Grollman
Living When A Loved One Has Died

"We bereaved are not alone. We belong to the largest company in all the world – the company of those who have known suffering"
– Helen Keller

Faith and Grief

How does grief affect faith? Perhaps a more useful question is how does faith affect grief? Losing a loved one in death is not easy. The experience can shake you mentally, physically, and spiritually. During the mourning process, it is not uncommon to rethink your beliefs about God and your relationship with a Higher Power.

Part of this rethinking process includes adjustment to the loss of what has seemed to be an "absolute relationship." Most people do not plan for those who are close to them to die. Married couples, for example, tend to plan for their future together. Depending on their age, couples normally plan on raising children, buying a house, retiring, etc. In this sense, a close relationship may seem to most of us to be something that will never end. When these relationships do come to an end it can be a struggle to adjust to life without the one who was supposed to be there forever.

Part of this experience can be the concern about whether another absolute relationship,

our relationship with God, might also end. For some people this concern may not be put into words or even fully understood. Yet this feeling causes a real faith crisis for the bereaved person. Fear of abandonment by God may become a serious concern.

Faith does not have to be destroyed through the grief experience. In fact, faith can actually become stronger. People dealing with grief often report they find themselves feeling closer to God as they process their grief. In order for positive spiritual growth to occur, it may be necessary to seek some assistance in processing what has taken place and how your faith has been impacted by the grief experience. A hospice grief counselor or your local faith community can help with processing faith and grief.





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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 hyneshospice.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 hyneshospice.org/grief-and-loss-support/.