

HOPELINE NEWSLETTER

A publication of HOPE FOR BEREAVED, a not-for-profit community organization providing hope, support and services for the bereaved.



Coping with Grief-It 's Called Living Through It

By: Gail Stone



Dad, I tried to wake Nana, I think she's dead."
 "Grandpa died yesterday."
 "Oh my God, Daddy's dead."
 "Uncle Jack died today."
 "Grandma died last night."

"I'm standing with the body of your deceased father-in-law."
 "Hon, I think we should get a divorce."
 "I'm sorry, but we weren't able to resuscitate your mother."
 "Mike called. He thinks Mary is dead."

This litany of phone calls and conversations on death or parting has all occurred in the past 30 years of my life, most in the last 20. Whether I was the one delivering or receiving these messages, the speaking of each one was the start of the long, seemingly endless process of grieving. Often, I felt so sucker punched that I doubted I could go on. Getting up the next day seemed impossible, yet somehow I almost always did.

Something deep inside told me I had to, that there was no other way to get through it, but to keep moving. I attribute that to my deep belief in a higher plan and a sense that getting through this trial was like going through a tunnel. I told myself that if I put one foot in front of the other, I would eventually come out the other side and be able to feel somewhat whole again. Sometimes, it was all I could do to put one toe in front of the other, but all forward movement I deemed positive.

The last five instances happened within the past five years, with my mother and sister-in-law and godfather's deaths back to back in '99, '00 and '01. Looking for the reason why I have been given so many opportunities to experience the grip of grief first hand, I now believe it was in order to help others and ease their way.

If you've been here, you know. There's no magic pill to get you through the immense pain, intense sadness and amazing denial, anger and upset that you feel. However, I did create, through trial and error, a few simple practices which have profoundly impacted my journey through the tunnel and I would like to share them with you.

(1) Every single day, let in the love of family, friends and co-workers. On those days that you feel you can't bear to see anyone or when you realize that some of them have moved on, thinking in error that you are "better", read through the cards you've received. Save and then play voice mail messages and re-read e-mails of support. Give your heart a visible reminder that others do care and want to share your pain. Let them - mentally off-load a bit of it onto their shoulders. Don't try to carry it all by yourself. It can crush you and it will try. Don't let it!

(2) Create a morning or evening meditation time. Even if you can't see how to find the time, do it somehow. This was especially helpful to me in getting through the horrible time of adjustment to life alone after my divorce and then again when my Mom died. I had always said a few wake-up prayers, but found I needed more. I started with Jerry Jampolsky's book, "Love is the Answer" and read one (short) chapter a day. Then, I bought the book "A Course on Miracles" and meditated on the daily passages. While the 365 lessons seemed to represent a huge commitment, the daily phrases were so empowering that I continued. Additionally, I saved affirmations from various sources like Science of Mind magazine and The Daily Word and read them daily. Any quote from a book or article that I thought would motivate me to get up and make the day a less painful one than the day before, I saved and re-read daily. I posted the best of them around my office and in my meditation area. I still do. When you actively start looking for empowering passages, you will be touched and inspired by what comes your way.

(3) Finally, but most importantly, express yourself in some way often! I would recommend that you do it daily, as well. I found out the hard way that keeping emotions bottled up or trying to ignore them hurt more in the long run and adversely affected my health. Talk to people about your loved one, write about him/her, start a journal of your thoughts and feelings, scream whenever you can find a place where you won't alarm the neighbors, family members or fellow travelers, do some kind of physical exercise to work off steam - whenever and wherever you can vent, do so daily.

Grief and Loneliness: Me and My Shadow

By Maureen Kramlinger

What is it about loneliness that makes us want to hide the fact that we are lonely? Anyone who has suffered the loss of a loved one naturally feels a gaping space in daily life and a cavernous emptiness within. Why don't we talk more about it?

I suspect it's because a common reaction to loneliness is the feeling of shame. Perhaps we think if we admit to loneliness, we'll seem defective: "If I'm lonely there must be something wrong with me. Maybe I'm needier than anybody else. Maybe I'm not attractive enough to draw others to me. Maybe nobody wants to be with me." No wonder loneliness holds its tongue, becomes a secret, and leads to more isolation.

Feelings of loneliness are normal—a part of our human experience, especially during mourning. In her book, **A Time to Grieve**, Carol Staudacher relates loneliness early in the grief process with longing for the loved one, the "only one who matters." She observes that when we lose the person closest to us, we feel as if "our whole world has lost its center." Those who are left seem inconsequential. In early intense grief one feels apart, set adrift on a sea of sorrow: "No one else knows how I feel or feels like I feel." At night, especially for those who live alone, a "dark foreboding threatens to swallow us."

Later in grieving, the way we experience loneliness changes. When comfortable habits woven through our relationship are ruptured by loss, and familiar words or actions don't take place, a void is created. We're devastated when we realize that the familiar call, note or gift from our loved one won't come again, ever.

With so much going on inside us, being out in public actually can take a toll. We may not want to be with others. We may feel as if we need time alone to absorb our loss. They may not understand our natural withdrawal, which may in turn intensify our sense of loneliness. And, if others give us time alone, we may believe we're no longer important to them.

Even as we move toward reconciling our loss, we still may feel lonely when we decide to reach out to engage more with life and with others again, but aren't sure how to do it. On the other hand, we may see the time we've spent alone begin to yield a gift—a desire for self-discovery or a new ability to take pleasure in our own company. As one widow said, "It still hurts, but I'm getting more used to being alone. Now I want to work on me—to learn more about who I am and what I want for the rest of my life."

HOPE 
For Bereaved, Inc.
A Journey from Grief to HOPE

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The purpose of this newsletter is to help those who have experienced the death of a loved one. Each month, we share information and ideas from bereaved people and professionals to help you through your grief journey.

COMFORT QUICKIES: SELF CARE WHILE GRIEVING

Chris Rothman, Ph.D.

During grieving, it is common to need breaks from our emotions. This in no way dishonors the seriousness of our concerns and the memories of our loved one. These ideas may give you some added nourishment to respond to the stress that comes with grieving.

- Lie in the sun streaming in through your windows. Bathe, breathe in the sun.
- Designate an afternoon or evening and take the phone off the hook.
- When you are worried or obsessing, set up a specific time of the day to "worry" for 20 minutes. Set a timer. When time is up, do something rewarding for yourself.
- Do something you're good at. It is important to ground yourself in your skills and abilities, even if the outcome isn't up to par (trouble concentrating and decreased zest are common in grief).
- Comfort yourself by taking a warm bath using your favorite scents, and burn aroma therapy candles—it's invigorating and relaxing at the same time.
- Buy yourself or your loved one a gift—and have the clerk gift wrap it. Choose the prettiest paper and bow. Celebrate fond memories.
- Wrap up in a warm blanket. Put on relaxation tapes and sip on your favorite tea or hot chocolate!
- Dressed in comfortable clothing, find a rocking chair and "rock your troubles away."
- Play music that matches your mood. Feel understood by the songs and singers that share your experiences.
- Especially when you are feeling stressed and overwhelmed, forget about making "to do" lists, and at the close of each day, make your list of "what's been done." No wonder you're tired!
- Burn Russian amber or sandalwood incense.
- Find something alive to care for: plants, pets, fish, etc.
- Eat at least one nourishing meal each day, even if the food doesn't hit your taste buds like you're used to.
- Put a fire in the fireplace and do some stretching and focus on yourself. (You can add your favorite soft music to this).
- Breathe—really breathe! Full belly. In through the nose, slowly out through the mouth.
- Say "No" to something...(and "Yes" to yourself).
- Try gentle exercise like yoga, tai chi, or walking.
- Spend some time in nature. Hug a tree!
- Make a memory box, collage, or journal to store your thoughts and memories.

After Suicide: Returning to Life, Thanks to an Owl

by Karyl Chastain Beal

Have you ever lost the ability to laugh? I did.

When Arlyn died, I knew I would never laugh again. After all, my child had taken her own life; she had died by suicide.

How could I really laugh, when I felt so empty? How could I let loose and laugh out loud, when I hurt so much?

Oh, I've managed to smile sometimes, and the sound of quiet laughter has slipped out of my lips a few times, but they were only superficial gestures: no belly laughs for me.

Then, a few months ago, I flew to Ft. Meade, Maryland, to visit my sister, Teresa, her husband Mac, and my nine-year old niece, Marisa.

They picked me up at the airport, and then we drove to their home. As we were unloading the car, I noticed a large owl perched on the edge of the carport. He had a wise content expression on his face.

Teresa told me that the owl had shown up several times over the previous week. Marisa said that they were getting so attached to him that she had named him Simon.

We tiptoed past the owl as we went into the house; we didn't want to disturb Simon and cause him to fly away. Teresa cautioned me to not get too close in case it were to suddenly lunge at me.

The next morning when we went outside, the owl was still there, in broad daylight! He had moved to a different place on the carport, and he looked quite content.

For the rest of my visit, every day, we'd check on the owl and marvel at the fact he had picked this house out of the whole neighborhood to claim as his home.

We'd also walk out to the car very quietly so we wouldn't frighten him away. I enjoyed checking on the owl almost as much as I enjoyed sightseeing in the area.

Occasionally, we'd would not see Simon on his carport perch, but he was never gone long. If he was gone, I missed him and worried that he might not return.

One morning, I excitedly grabbed my camera, almost tripping over my own two feet to get photos of this rare visitor. Even though he had moved to a different location, he was not rattled by my presence as I snuck closer to take his photo.

I called to Mac to get his camera, too, but he calmly said he could not find his camera. I couldn't understand why he didn't seem concerned about missing this opportunity for a wonderful up-close photo.

One day, I looked up owls on the Internet to learn more about them; I discovered they eat rats and mice. When I told Teresa about the owl's diet, she smiled and seemed really pleased that he'd taken up residence there.

When the day arrived for me to return home, I got up early to check on Simon. He was there, a little farther down on his perch, but just as big as ever.

I lingered, savoring the chance to be so close to him one last time. Then, I quietly slipped out to the car with my luggage and loaded it into the trunk.

A few minutes later, I looked up then toward the carport and I saw Teresa walking out of the house, carrying a broom!

Before I knew what was happening, she pulled the broom back behind her and swung it at the owl as hard as she could, knocking the poor helpless bird to the ground.

My heart almost jumped out of my blouse, I was so shocked! Teresa is normally a reasonable person, so I could not imagine what had suddenly possessed her to treat this bird so cruelly! Especially right in front of little Marisa.

I wanted to scream at her to stop the madness, but only a loud grunt came out.

Teresa turned to look at me, and then she dropped the broom. She bent down, picked up the wounded bird and ran toward the car with it in her hands. Strangely, she had an eerie grin on her face! What was going on?

By the time Teresa reached the car, I was almost hyperventilating I was so upset.

Teresa held Simon up to the window and said "Karyl, this is not a real owl. It's a fake owl that I got to keep the birds away."

It took a moment for the truth to sink in, but once I realized she had not beaten a live owl, and that I'd been the butt of a practical joke perpetrated by the whole family for over a week, I laughed so hard that a waterfall of tears spilled down my cheeks.

A while later, after I got control of myself, I realized something that surprised me. That was the first time since Arlyn had died that I had relaxed enough to laugh to the core. And it felt good.

I knew then that I was finally alive again, even though it had taken almost 7 years to reach that point.

When someone we love dies, we may feel as if we died, too. Sooner or later, however, if we allow ourselves to process our grief in a healthy way, we will return to life. A true test of when we reach that point may be when we can laugh with every ounce of our being.

Karyl Chastain Beal

Death & Education support and counseling, Certified Thanatologist. Author of articles and stories published in magazines and newspapers, Chicken Soup for the Unsinkable Soul. [Suicide Memorial Wall http://suicidememorialwall.com](http://suicidememorialwall.com)

Tips for Creative Coping

1. Identify specific feelings. Do not generalize.
2. Acknowledge your thoughts. Accept both the positive and the negative.
3. Make a conscious attempt to regain a sense of humor, zest for living.
4. Figure out exactly what you want to do.... DO IT!
5. Become as informed/knowledgeable as possible. Knowledge is power.
6. Assert yourself. As for what you need.
7. Believe in yourself.
8. Listen to yourself.
9. Engage in whatever exercise and activity is possible. Get moving.
10. Set small goals first. Accomplish them. Set bigger goals.
11. Set specific date with yourself to do something you like. It helps lift you out of depression.
12. Reach out to others.
14. Search for joy every day. **INSIST ON IT!**
15. Try to retain a sense of perspective.
16. Pick your worries. Don't worry about worrying.
17. Remember that life requires effort on your part. Work at lifting depression.
18. **ONE DAY AT A TIME...KNOW SOME DAYS ALL YOU CAN MANAGE IS ONE MINUTE AT A TIME.**
19. Don't wait for happiness...**MAKE IT HAPPEN NOW.**
20. Realize that love isn't enough, but nothing works without it.
21. Don't forget how to dream. Practice it often.
22. Be kind to yourself. Learn to forgive yourself first.
23. **LAUGH.** (at least once a day)
24. Listen to everyone.... But follow your own music.
25. Hug someone often. **HUG YOURSELF.**

Miss Me, But Let Me Go

Author Unknown

When I come to the end of the road, and the sun has set for
me.

I want no rites in a gloom-filled room.

Why cry for a soul set free?

Miss me a little-but not for too long, and not with your head
bowed low.

Remember the love that was once shared.

Miss me, but let me go.

For this is a journey we all must take, and each must go
alone.

It's all part of the master's plan, a step on the road to home.

When you are lonely and sick of heart, go to the friends we
know.

HOPELine Newsletter

May 2009 Support Group Meetings

This month's topic: Depression

MEETING TIME 6:30 to 8:30 PM

1st Wed May 6th "Young at Heart" WIDOWS, WIDOWERS & SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

2nd Tues May 12th GENERAL

3rd Tues May 19th HOPE FOR YOUNGER WIDOWS, WIDOWERS, ENGAGED AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

3rd Tues May 19th- HOPE FOR YOUTH

3rd Wed May 20th BEREAVED PARENTS

3rd Wed May 20th HOPE FOR YOUTH

3rd Thurs May 21st MURDER VICTIM FAMILIES

2nd Wed May 13th SUICIDE

4th Wed May 27th SUICIDE

Other Support Group Meeting Times

3rd Wed May 20th 10am to noon (seniors)

DAYTIME GROUP FOR WIDOWS/WIDOWERS

ADDITIONAL MEETINGS/INFORMATION

Over the Rainbow: 1st Monday each month at 7:00 at Northminster Presbyterian Church. For widows & widowers longer bereaved. Call Bill or Jean Mann @638-4936 or Claire Ramsden @475-9742.

HOPE for Bereaved, Fulton & Oswego: (2nd Tuesday) 7-9 PM. Oswego Hospital, 110 W 6th St., Rm. 1, lower level. For information contact Adele DelSavio @ 652-5145 or Donna Lupien @342-6326.

Organ Donor Family Support Group: Upon request, please call Ellen Kulik @685-1755 for information.

One-to-One Counseling: Contact HOPE at 475-9675 for an appointment. *All counseling is free-of-charge.*

HOPE SUPPORT GROUPS

HOPE for Youth: Separate, age appropriate groups for children and teens who have experienced the death of their parent, sibling, relative or friend. Pizza is served. Topic:

HOPE for Bereaved, General: For anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one: parent, sibling, relative or friend.

HOPE for Survivors of Suicide: For those who have experienced the death of a child, spouse or friend by suicide.

HOPE for Bereaved Parents: For those whose children of any age died by accident, illness, miscarriage, stillbirth, newborn death or SIDS.

Newsletter Work Meeting: 2nd Wednesday 10AM. Come help with the newsletter mailing, enjoy camaraderie and a great lunch prepared by Pat.

Support Group for Men

2nd Thursday of each month from 6:30 p.m.- 8:30 p.m. at HOPE's Center. This group is for bereaved men who have experienced the death of a spouse, child, parent or friend. Jim Roschick is the group facilitator who has a degree in rehabilitation and grief counseling. Jim's son, Eric was killed in a car accident in 2001. He is dedicated to helping others who are grieving the death of a loved one.

Facing the Loss of an Infant

A family was gathered in the hospital where a couple's twelve hour old infant daughter had died. The sister of this couple said, "It's so hard to hold her. It makes it all so real." She had spent only hours with her niece and already was feeling the impact of this child's death. If it takes only hours for an aunt to feel the loss, how can we begin to explain the impact on the parents?

Miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant death are not thought by many to be significant because the parents didn't really know the baby. Once a pregnancy is confirmed, the parents think about the baby all the time. The child is a part of their daily lives. They form a mental picture of the baby and plan what college he or she will attend, names are chosen and rooms are decorated.

Parents are sometimes encouraged to have another baby as soon as possible in the belief that they will then forget about the baby that died. Most parents do go on to have another child, if able, simply because they are in the family-building part of their lives. They know it will not take away the pain or replace the child that died.

Getting through the next pregnancy can be an emotional roller coaster. On the one hand is the job and hope for the new baby, and on the other is the vulnerability and fear that what happened before may happen again. However, because they feel so exposed, parents now worry about everything that could happen, not only what caused the previous loss.

Because many people see infant loss as insignificant and easily forgotten, they offer either no support or support only in the first few days or weeks. After that time, parents are assumed to have healed and forgotten.

Parents need to know that it is okay to ask for help or to take life easy and be good to themselves. Remember, grief can heal only if you let it.

By: JoAnne Matzke, TCF, Hinsdale, Illinois, www.compassionatefriends.org, (877) 969-0010

Share Your Story/Underwriting Opportunity

If you would like to submit an article to appear in HOPELine Newsletter, please send it to Kelly O'Neill-Rossi, HOPELine Newsletter Editor, at krossi1@aol.com or call 315-475-9675. We are looking for articles that inspire *hope*, *help* and *healing* for the bereaved.

Each month, HOPELine is sent to 1,200 families throughout Central New York and the United States. If you would like to underwrite the cost of HOPELine for a specific month, please contact Kelly at HOPE. It costs \$450 to underwrite the newsletter. Your donation will fund 100% of the expense of a newsletter for a month. You may include a special dedication to your loved one. Contact Kelly O'Neill-Rossi at HOPE, 475-9675 for more information.

**Mark Your Calendars! Delmonico's Italian Steakhouse Anniversary
Event to benefit HOPE is Tuesday, May 19th from 4 p.m.-10 p.m.**

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