



Bereavement Bulletin

Our eight-county service area: Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, and Union

Experiencing the Suffering of Grief

**By Larry Dawalt, M. Div.
Director of Spiritual & Grief Care Services**

There are five key words in William Worden's tasks of grief: accepting, experiencing, adjusting, withdrawing, and reinvesting. While these words can be viewed with a snapshot approach by those not heavily invested, they are process words to those who grieve, like a never-ending movie reel that exhaustingly engages the senses and stirs the heart with the constant ebb and flow of a sea of emotion.

This sea of emotion is filled with visual, auditory, and kinesthetic sensory representations that wash like waves upon those who are grieving, sometimes flowing gently and other times crashing with an intensity that erodes stability and impedes day-to-day functioning.

The bottom line is simply that it hurts, and the degree of hurt is as unique as the lost relationships. As a society, we don't like to suffer and we usually take whatever steps are necessary to avoid suffering. No pain, no gain may work in training for sports, but as a general rule we don't really follow that mantra.

So why is suffering necessary in the grief process?

Experiencing the suffering of grief is the only way to begin to get off of the 'emotional roller coast' that makes the grief process so exhausting. The hills and curves of this emotional roller coaster consist of many intense emotions including sadness, guilt, fear, anger, shame, loneliness, and jealousy that often create feelings of immobilization and listlessness. Often, these emotions bring tears and these tears aren't always easy to accept because they can come at awkward or unexpected times. However, being able to weep over the losses is part of the healing process. It hurts to hurt, but in the long run, it helps to hurt

because experiencing the hurt is the only way to begin to heal the hurt. The problem with this premise is that we still don't want to hurt and we don't like to hurt. But if we have loved, we will hurt because love is not perfect, especially the way love ends. We live, we love, we lose.

So what helps when we are suffering? The answer to that question is different for each person, but there are some universal helps, the first of which is emotional support. Nothing replaces having someone who cares at a deep level. That person may be someone you have known for a long time or it may be a new friend or even a professional acquaintance. Another thing that helps is to share your grief with those who have experienced similar losses. They won't know exactly how you feel, but they'll have enough of an idea to walk the path with you. Another thing that helps is to remember your loved one with others who have similar memories. You may alternate between crying together and laughing together, but the key is that you are doing it together.

Providing care for those who are grieving is a tremendous challenge. At the same time it is a humbling privilege and honor to walk with those whose hearts are broken with sadness. We work together to accomplish the tasks of grief, yet we always remember that we are on no set schedule and there is no pressure to move at any prescribed pace. We move toward a future that we didn't ask for and are having trouble accepting, yet we go on because others have gone on before us; and it is in the going on that we receive gifts that we can give to others who will need our help to go on as they suddenly find themselves upon the path which we now walk.

The Anger of Grief Is Often Misunderstood

*By Janice Olive MHDL
Grief Counselor*

Anger is an emotion that many of us feel when we face loss and situations beyond our control. It is common yet often misunderstood. For some it is the emotion they fear and for others the familiar emotion they turn to. Anger, like all emotion, is neither bad nor good but a natural human response. How we behave when we feel angry is what can resolve or create problems. The price paid for distorting anger can be enormous, taking a toll on families, communities and nations.

Candace Lightener writes about her angry response to the death of her child, describing the feeling as a motivator for her work in forming the group **Mothers Against Drunk Driving** or **MADD**. She became a leader in the movement to create tougher laws against drinking and driving. Putting her energy into action, doing something about the problem that caused her tragic loss, helped her to cope.

Anger can also be a cover for a multitude of feelings that one may consider too painful or debilitating to face. We learn from example that some feelings are acceptable and manly, like anger, while sadness and crying is a sign of weakness and often more acceptable in women. Often, parents model anger to their sons while discouraging their daughters from expressing their angry feelings at all. Holding on to just one feeling can keep us from fully grieving our loss, postpone our process and create additional stress, delaying our adjustment to change and interfering in our ability to have meaningful relationships.

Our thoughts can turn a response from anger to rage. Two people can have the same things happen to them, for example in a work situation, one feels angry the other accelerates and flies into a full blown rage. The difference may be in the meaning they attribute to the situation. If you feel singled out for a personal attack, the incident can become debilitating or you can fan the flames of anger by assuming the worse possible outcome. If you merely acknowledge that you do not like it, but can handle the situation, your anger can turn to motivation to excel in your work.

Think of a time you felt anger. What were you telling yourself? What thoughts made it worse and what thoughts helped? If you find yourself consistently overreacting to situations that others seem to handle with grace you may want to talk to someone who can help you with some anger management techniques that will better meet your needs.

Some people mask their anger, going silent, cold and withdrawn and fear relationships. Some try to use food or too much work or drink to cover up their feelings. Some people learn that an angry response is never justified and try too hard to control any emotional reactions, coming off as uncaring and insincere.

Grief expert, Earl Grollman, addresses anger in children: A first impulse of an enraged individual is to lash out at the people who are perceived as having caused the suffering. It is natural to wish to retaliate against those who have hurt you. Adults understand this need to vent their hostility, yet often they won't tolerate this behavior in their children.

Do not react to your children's anger with threats of further punishment. They have enough guilt and pain. Instead, approach them with patience and respect. Listen as they tell you about their fears and animosity. If you say, "How can you speak about your poor, dead sister that way?" you bring the dialogue to a speedy and unsatisfactory conclusion.

Never scold them for feelings, or make them feel ashamed of their emotions, or tell them that they should have only good thoughts about the person who has died. If you and your child cannot recall unhappy memories of the deceased, then you may not yet have accepted the reality of death.

Resentment is a natural part of the grieving process and helps to express anguish and frustration at the curtailment of a life so precious. Bottling up anger causes greater stress and leads to depression."

It may be hard for you to find those with the time or patients to listen long enough or be with you when you are feeling angry. At the same time we are told it is best to find ways of getting it out, expressing it safely, not being shamed for having strong feelings while grieving. There are many opportunities to get support from the grief care staff at HPCCR and your talks with them are confidential. We are not here to judge or to tell you what you should feel but are open to talking with you about your experience. Finding someone you can trust and count on to be with you during such a time is a good start to healing through grief.

Grief Workshops - Winter 2010

Turning the Page: Starting a New Chapter

Please call Gerri Cummings at 704.335.4334 or cummingsg@hpccr.org for registration.

*Monday, January 25, 2010, 6 pm
Hospice & Palliative Care Lincoln County
107 North Cedar Street
Lincolnton, NC 28092*

*Tuesday, January 26, 2010, 2:30 pm
Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region
Uptown
1420 East Seventh Street
Charlotte, NC 28204*

*Thursday, January 28, 2010, 6 pm
Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region
South Charlotte
7845 Little Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28226*

*Thursday, January 28, 2010, 6 pm
Hospice & Palliative Care Lake Norman
Levine & Dickson Hospice House
The Park Huntersville
11900 Vanstory Drive
Huntersville, NC 28078*

Grief Support Groups

“Grief: The Reluctant Journey” winter support groups begin in February at our HPCCR-Uptown, HPCCR-South Charlotte, Lake Norman, and Lincoln County locations. A pre-group interview with one of our grief counselors is required prior to registration for the grief support groups. In order to respect the group process, new members to our support groups will not be admitted after the first session. Please call **Gerri Cummings** at **704.335.4334** to arrange an appointment for a pre-group interview.



“Let’s Do Lunch”

4th Wednesday of each month - 11:30am
The Olive Garden
9421 Pineville-Matthews Road
Pineville, NC 28134

For information contact:
Marge Brokaw, LPC - 704.335.4308
Grief Counselor

4th Thursday of each month - 11:30am
Bob Evans Restaurant
16707 Northcross Drive
Huntersville, NC 28078
I-77 - Exit 25

For information contact:
Amy Thomas, MSW - 704.650.1949
Grief Counselor



Save This “Soup-er” Date!

Mark **Sunday, January 31, 2010** on your calendar for the **10th Annual Soup on Sunday** event. This premier event offers the opportunity to sample soups from over thirty Charlotte area restaurants, purchase pottery bowls made especially for this event by local potters, and showcase the talents of culinary arts students from Central Piedmont Community College, Johnson & Wales, and The Art Institute. Tickets are \$30 for General Admission or \$40 for the Soup Lover’s Special (includes a pottery bowl). For details, visit www.hpccr.org, or contact Nancy Cole at 704.335.4312 or colen@hpccr.org.

“The greatest gifts between us and the one we are now missing can never be worn out, weathered, exchanged, or returned. For we gave each other something that can never be taken from us — a treasure of memories.”

-Wanda Y. Johnson

Individual grief counseling sessions are available upon request at all offices.

For more information on grief support groups, grief education, or to discuss your feelings and experiences with loss, please call 704.335.4300. Our office hours are Monday - Friday, 8:30am - 5pm.



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The mission of Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region is to relieve suffering and improve the quality and dignity of life through compassionate hospice care for those at the end of life, palliative care for those with advanced illness, and through community education.

How we care for you: Hospice Care, Palliative Medicine Consultants, Pediatric Care Kids Path®, Grief Care, Inpatient & Residential Hospice Care, and Professional & Community Education