



At times it seems like yesterday, at other times an eternity, since your loved one died. Over the past months, there may have been ups and downs, bad days and good days, and several adjustments in your life. There have probably been several special dates like birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays that you have experienced for the first time without them. And of course, there are still times when you run across that favorite picture, hear that special song, or smell a familiar fragrance and remember them both with happiness and pain at the same time.

Maybe you've asked, "When is the grief over?" You have probably gotten a lot of advice from people telling you to "get on with your life," and others telling you, "It's too soon for that." The truth is there is not a set time frame. We all go at our own pace through grief, and the right time for you is the time it takes you.

Enclosed are handouts giving you some ideas of what is meant by "getting better." Often, I tell people that it is simply a matter of the good days outnumbering the bad days. We learn how to go on in life. Yet there will always be times when we truly miss having our loved one by our side, and then the pain of our loss returns. Just remember that those temporary setbacks happen to everyone and are a normal part of the grief experience.

Because we believe that family needs are special after the death of a loved one, hospice care continues throughout this first year of bereavement. Along with the handouts mentioned above, I am enclosing information about the hospice follow-up program, along with general information about loss and grief. I hope you will find it helpful.

We will be in touch with you throughout the year. If ever the Bereavement team can help or be of service in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us. Please know that you continue to be in our thoughts and prayers.

## ***Choice Bereavement Services***

### **The team cares about you and offers these services to you to help you during your time of grief.**

- Individual Support - through telephone, home, or office visits
- Group Support - through participation in group therapy with others who have also lost loved ones. Groups are organized as needed or a referral is made.
- Self Help - through information gained through a bereavement bulletin sent directly to you with inspiring and helpful information included to support you during your bereavement. We also maintain a library of books related to loss and grief, which are available for your use.

### **Taking advantage of follow-up care can help you deal with your grief by:**

- Making available a trusted and compassionate person who will listen to your concerns.
- Providing education about the grief process and what you can expect to be experiencing.
- Learning new ways to cope with the stress of loss and grief.
- Providing help to become involved in life again.
- Simply knowing someone is available for you may help you feel relieved and more secure about your situation.

### **Understanding Grief**

- Grief, with its many ups and downs, lasts longer than society, in general, recognizes. Be patient with yourself.
- Each person's grief is individual. You and your family will experience it and cope with it differently.
- Crying is an acceptable and healthy expression of grief and releases built-up tension for the bereaved person. Cry freely as you feel the need.
- Physical reactions to the death of a loved one may include loss of appetite or over-eating, sleeplessness and sexual difficulties. The bereaved may find that he/she has very little energy and cannot concentrate. A balanced diet, rest and moderate exercise are especially important to you at this time.
- Avoid the use of drugs and alcohol. Medication should be taken sparingly and only under the supervision of your physician. Many substances are addictive and can lead to chemical dependence. In addition, they may stop or delay the necessary grieving process.
- Friends and relatives may be uncomfortable around you. They want to ease your pain but do not know how. Take the initiative and help them learn how to be supportive to you. Talk about your loved one so they will know this is appropriate.
- Whenever possible, put off major decisions (changing residences, changing job, etc.) for at least a year.

- Avoid making hasty decisions about your loved one's belongings. Do not allow others to rush you. You can do it little by little whenever you feel ready.
- You may feel you have nothing to live for and may think about a release from this intense pain. Be assured that many bereaved people feel this way, but that a sense of purpose and meaning does return. The pain does lessen.
- Guilt, real or imagined, is a normal part of grief. It surfaces in thoughts and feelings. Learn to forgive yourself.
- Anger is another common reaction to loss. Anger, like guilt, needs expression and hearing in a healthy and acceptable manner.

### **Techniques for Healing After the Loss of a Loved One**

- Admit to yourself that you are having feelings of grief.
- Fully experience these very painful feelings.
- Repressing your feelings is detrimental to your health
- When asked, "how are you doing?" do not respond with "fine" if in fact you do not feel fine. Share only what and how much you wish to share.
- Remove "should" and "ought" from your vocabulary. Instead, say to yourself "I will do this." Make your own choices, not what you think others will want you to say and think.
- Gradually learn to refer to your possessions as "mine" rather than "ours" (if the death was that of a spouse.) In doing so, you are living in the present rather than in the past.
- Pay attention to your dreams. They often reveal subconscious attitudes. Journaling your dreams will help you to see and work through them.
- Build new relationships and find new friends. Try new activities. Join a grief support group or other organizations that will help you to live again.
- Have an imaginary conversation with the person who died. Talk over your future plans and say "goodbye" so you can move on.
- Think about problems carefully. Decide what you feel is best for you, and then do it without regrets.
- Think of yourself as a person who is handling a deeply painful experience as best you can.
- Be fully aware of your environment and the people around you. This will help you deal with your loss.
- Spend some time alone. Get to know yourself, you will find much to like about you.
- You can grow through this stressful experience. Your feelings and emotions are normal. It's what you do with your feelings that make a difference.

## ***Loneliness***

***No one really understands  
what loneliness is  
until he has experienced it himself.***

***Widows and widowers  
know what it means to be lonely.***

***Those who have lost their dearest friends  
or a constant companion  
or a precious child  
know what it means  
to be lonely.***

***An empty chair,  
a quiet house,  
silent meals,  
and long dark nights all these intensify  
the awesome feelings  
of loneliness.***

***Those who have never experienced  
true loneliness  
may say they understand  
but they really don't.***

***But God understands.  
God understands completely.  
And God promises to go with you  
through the long dark valley  
of your present loneliness.***

***You may still often feel lonely,  
but you will never be alone.***