



FAITH & HOPE HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE

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Epilogue

Bereavement Newsletter

January/February 2021

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Children's Grief by Sarah Girling

Grieving for an important loss in your life is not an effortless task for anyone. No matter if we are prepared for it or not, death is a triggering experience that will bring up a variety of surprising emotions and behaviors. When children have someone close to them pass away, there are different reactions and responses that are both similar and different from adults.

One thing that children rely heavily on are routines. When someone in their lives passes away, a disruption in the routine tends to create unpredictability and instability in their lives. Even infants will notice the changes as the person holding them will no longer feel, smell, or carry them the same way. It might be uncomfortable or difficult to use the words 'death' and 'dying' when explaining what has occurred.

(continued on p. 4)

Book Recommendation

Surviving the Death of a Sibling

by T.J. Wray

When T.J. Wray lost her 43-year-old brother, her grief was deep and enduring and, she soon discovered, not fully acknowledged. Despite the longevity of adult sibling relationships, surviving siblings are often made to feel as if their grief is somehow unwarranted. After all, when an adult sibling dies, he or she often leaves behind parents, a spouse, and even children—all of whom suffer a more socially recognized type of loss.

Based on the author's own experiences, as well as those of many others, *Surviving the Death of a Sibling* helps adults who have lost a brother or sister to realize that they are not alone in their struggle. Just as important, it teaches them to understand the unique stages of their grieving process, offering practical and prescriptive advice for dealing with each stage. Warm and personal, and a rich source of useful insights and coping strategies, *Surviving the Death of a Sibling* is a unique addition to the literature of bereavement. (Book review by Amazon)

Published 2003; ISBN: 978-0609809808

A Note From Your Bereavement Services Coordinator

Congratulations on surviving 2020! This past year was intense and full of the unexpected. No one could have predicted all we went through, from massive wildfires, a bitter election, and of course the profound impacts of the coronavirus on all aspects of life. If you are reading this newsletter, then you likely lost a loved one this year. Coronavirus likely impacted how you mourned their death with impacts on funerals and memorial service gatherings.

We can only hope that 2021 will be calmer and allow life to return to normal... whatever that looks like now. Regardless, please know that Faith and Hope Hospice is still here for you to support you through your grief process, no matter what the new year has in store for us.

Reid Jacobs

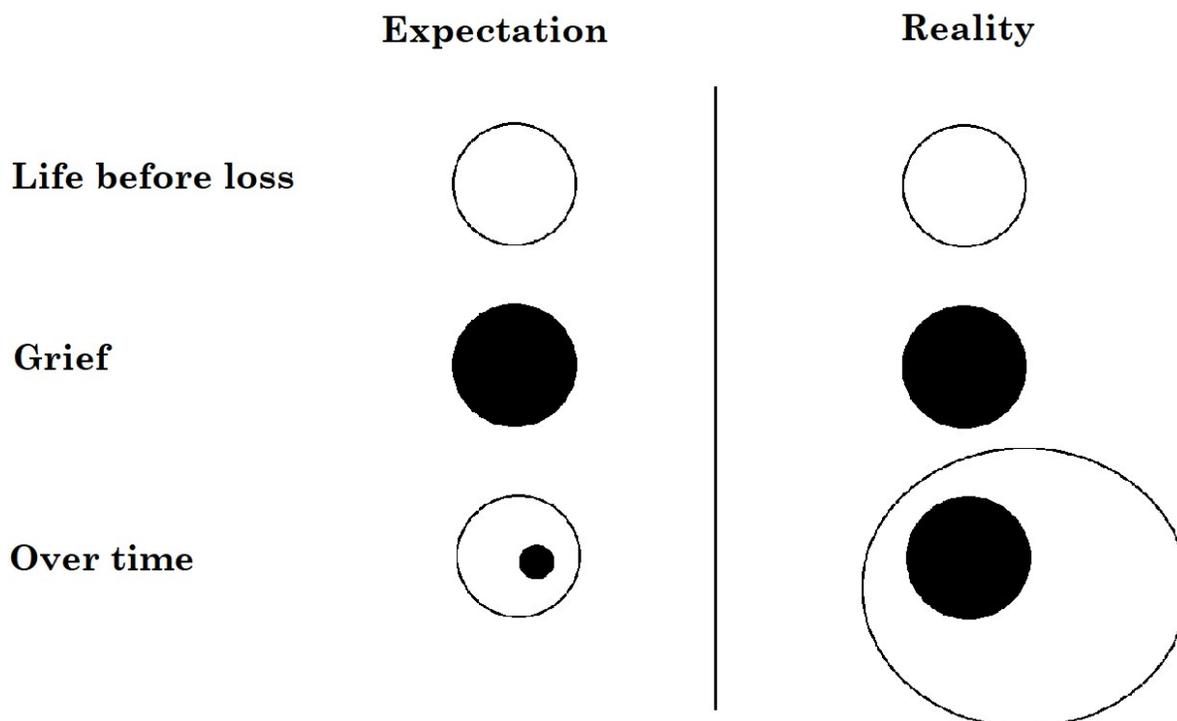
Reid Jacobs, APHSW-C, MSW, CT
Bereavement Services Coordinator



“Little by little, we let go of loss... but never of love.”

— Renee Daniels

Growing Around Grief



Grief Explored: Growing Around Grief

The most common question I get about grief is related to how long grief will last. When we lose someone close to us grief can feel overwhelming, and it seems to invade every aspect of life. Grief is everywhere. Every part of life is affected. Usually, this begins to fade. Over time, life starts to emerge from the darkness of grief. With more time, life becomes more manageable. It's as though grief is shrinking, receding with time. The grief never fully goes away, but it becomes much less prominent in daily life. There are still moments of grief that may feel overwhelming. There are still unexpected tears, but life continues with its new normal.

Some people feel distressed when grief shrinks. It can seem like they don't care as much as they once did. They may feel guilt that their grief is shrinking. They may question if their love for the deceased person is shrinking too. For these people, the *Growing Around Grief* model by Dr. Lois Tonkin may be helpful. This model imagines grief as a black spot that fills all aspects of life. Over time grief doesn't change size, but life starts to grow around it. This is often symbolized by drawing a circle around a black spot. Over time, the circle enlarges. This symbolizes life continuing and growing beyond the grief. The important thing here is that the grief does not change. Instead, life grows. The grief feels less consuming because it no longer pervades all aspects of life.

There are still times when grief feels just as big as it once did. That's because it is just as big as at the start.

The focus of this model is that our love and connection with the deceased doesn't shrink. That bond stays the same. Life has just filled in around it. We may no longer feel consumed with grief, but that doesn't mean we don't love or miss the deceased person any less. Life has grown around the grief.

Granted, this is not an image of grief that works for everyone. The idea that grief never diminishes is too much for some, but the grief will not always feel overwhelming or as intense as it does initially. Over time we learn ways to cope. We learn to rely on friends and family. The grief may stay but the way life expands makes it manageable and less intense.

The *Growing Around Grief* model shows us that grief will always be part of life. It never fully goes away. It will always be okay to feel the big emotions of grief. Memories, birthdays, certain smells or songs will occasionally remind us of the person who died which may trigger grief. This is okay. It's also okay to not feel these emotions. Eventually, as life grows, we spend more time out of grief. We don't forget it. We don't forget the person who died, but the grief no longer consumes us.

~

You can visit FuneralGuide.Net at

<http://bit.ly/2KVPpI8>

to learn more about Growing Around Grief .

However, using realistic words versus phrases such as 'crossed over' and 'sleep' will help the grieving process, according to various studies. Displaying your own grief will demonstrate to children that it is normal to cry and express emotions. This will help make it more comfortable for them to express themselves in a healthy manner as well. These emotions may come up at both unexpected and expected periods of time such as birthdays, holidays, or special occasions. During these times, it will help to spend quality time with them and let them know that it is okay to display and feel a range of emotions. Even discussing ahead of time about new traditions to honor your loved one will help create a more positive experience. In a child's eye, adults are supposed to be all knowing and have an answer for every question. Getting comfortable with saying "I do not know" and gauging how much information to share that will be appropriate for a young one to accept is something that will help the process overall. A child may also express an interest in attending the funeral. If so, we encourage children to participate in age-appropriate ways. Once children are grown up, it is hard to say if they will remember exactly how the funeral progressed; but they will remember how it affected them on an emotional level.

If allowed to attend, descriptions on what to expect beforehand will help prepare and reduce the stress of a potentially overwhelming experience.

There are different signs that children could possibly display when grieving a loss. Anger of losing a stable person in their lives, whether being a parent, sibling, or friend is a normal response for a child to turn to. This can be displayed through rough play, nightmares, or irritability. Regression in behavior is another sign. Examples of this could be needing more attention, cuddling more, unrealistic demands, baby talk, or wetting the bed at night. Children ages 2-7 tend to think they are the cause of their surroundings, which could create feelings of guilt or blame. So it is important to also reassure them that the dying is not their fault. Other behaviors to watch for are grades dropping in school, withdrawing from friends, an ongoing disinterest in hobbies, fear of being alone, trouble going to sleep, or repetitive statements of wanting to be with the deceased. If these signs persist, consider reaching out to a professional, school psychologist, hospice bereavement team, or other qualified mental health professionals to help your child accept the death and develop healthy coping mechanisms.

Bereavement Services Available

Despite COVID-19, we continue to provide our full range bereavement services, although all in-person support has moved to an online format. In addition to this bereavement newsletter & our periodic mailings, Faith & Hope Hospice also provides:

- Resources via email
- Annual Patient Memorial
- Phone-based support
- Web-based counseling for individuals and families
- Referrals

Contact Reid at **818-559-1460** to request these services.

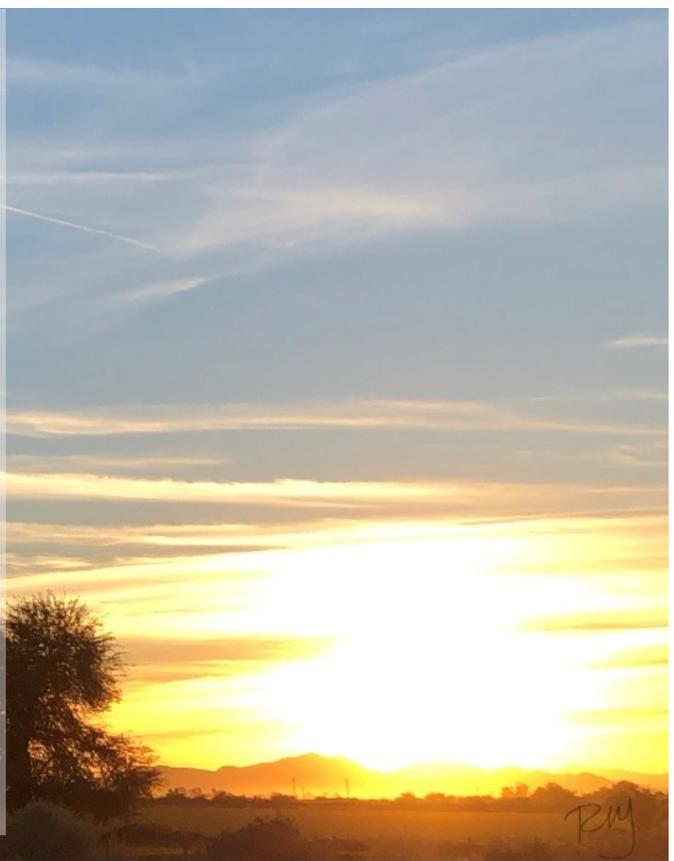
I Miss You

-Author Unknown

I miss you in the morning
And when the sunset fades away,
The ache within my heart
Just will not go away.

My heart fills with love for you
When I think, how much you
cared,
As I relive all the happiness
And the joy that we both shared.

You're with me every moment
And in every move I make,
Lie the memories I have of you
That I never will forsake.



Mindfulness & Guided Imagery

I have mentioned mindfulness a lot in the previous Epilogue newsletters, but it keeps coming up because it's such a great tool to help people cope with grief and stresses of all types. However, I have not explained what I mean by "mindfulness." The best description that I've found is from the founder of Health Journeys, Belleruth Naparstek, who produces recorded meditations and guided imagery sessions. She describes mindfulness as, "the practice of noticing and focusing, in a detached but curious way, on moment-to-moment awareness of our physical, emotional, and mental sensations and perceptions without trying to change them in any way." Mindfulness works because knowing what's going on within and around us, we are better able to deal with it. It can also give a sense of power over your circumstances.

The practice of mindfulness can take many forms, both active and passive in nature. The easiest way to start is to use

guided imagery. This can be done with a therapist or through audio and video recordings.

A more active approach to mindfulness is through meditation. This process requires the individual to focus on their own state of being, their breathing, emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations. Generally, the goal is to keep the mind focused on one specific thing, like breathing or on a word or idea, like "peace" or "I am enough." Sometimes these are referred to as mantras. The mind tends to wander, so the goal is to bring the focus back onto the mantra or breathing.

Mindfulness is not necessarily religious or spiritual in nature, but some people do choose to incorporate their faith into their practice. This could be done by focusing on a scripture or having a short prayer, like "God be with me," for example.

P.S. I Love You

(2007) PG-13 | 2h 6min

Comedy, Drama, Romance

Starring: Hilary Swank, Gerard Butler, Harry Connick, Jr., Lisa Kudrow

This movie follows the life of a 29-year-old widow, Holly (Swank) whose husband, Gerry (Butler), died from a brain tumor. We see the raw emotions of grief that she experiences and the impact on her daily life. Soon, Holly begins to receive letters from her deceased husband. These letters provide encouragement and prompt her to start re-engaging with life. The prompts

begin small— putting on a party dress and going out dancing with friends to taking a trip to Gerry's hometown in Ireland where the two first met and fell in love. We also see the strain grief puts on Holly's relationships with friends and family, especially as they move forward with life as one friend gets engaged and another becomes pregnant.

P.S. I Love You accurately captures many of the ways that people cope with and respond to death. It shows the consequences of unhealthy coping, like prolonged isolation. The movie also shows a wide-range of responses loved-ones have as they try to support Holly during this difficult time.

Recipes from the Heart

My grandma would always make this dish for special family dinners and passed the recipe on to me and my sister. She passed away last year, and while we were planning the funeral, we had this for family dinner in remembrance of her. Whenever I am missing her (which is often) I make this dish.

-Amy Girling; Family/Friend

Grandma's Chicken and Rice

Ingredients

6 chicken breasts

6 slices Swiss cheese

1 can cream of mushroom soup

¼ cup dry vermouth

2 cup Pepperidge Farms dressing (croutons)

½ cup melted butter

Directions

1. Mix vermouth and cream of mushroom soup together and pour into a shallow baking dish or 9x13" cake pan
2. Put chicken on bottom of pan and place 1 slice of cheese on top of each breast.
3. Breakup croutons and sprinkle over chicken
4. Drizzle melted butter on top
5. Bake at 350° F for 60-90 min.

~Grandma normally serves the chicken with rice pilaf (Near East brand)

Self-care is a concept that's often misunderstood. Hearing the term tends to conjure up images of day spas, aroma therapy and unplugging from all electronic devices. While these can be good forms of self-care, they may not be realistic for most of us, most of the time. Also, self-care extends far beyond self-indulgent activities. Consider self-care to be a form of self-awareness, self-compassion, and self-healing instead of a narcissistic luxury. It is a necessary skill that's needed to thrive.

There are two main types of self-care: Macro & Micro. The first, macro, includes regular habits that are done on an ongoing basis that contribute to one's overall health and well-being.

These can include eating a healthy diet, getting plenty of sleep, and regular exercise. Taking medications as prescribed and keeping regular medical and dental appointments fall into this category too. To me, these are the very basic forms of self-care. There are plenty of other routines that can be utilized as well.

Regular vacations, whether two weeks on a cruise or taking a long weekend *staycation*, can recharge a person. The regular routine of vacations can build reserves for stressful times, too. Being aware of stressful times and taking action to circumvent them are also crucial.

Volunteering is yet another form of self-care. That sounds counter-intuitive. Altruistic acts do benefit others by definition, but they can provide a sense of pride and joy to the giver. It is important, however, that the giving stays reasonable and not at the expense of the giver. It can be easy for some of us to offer more than we are capable of giving.

But these macro activities are bigger, long-term methods. Micro interventions can be used as needed or throughout the day, despite activity or location. These methods require minimal time and energy but can have big payoff. They are also no cost options too.

One of the easiest methods is to take a time out. If you are feeling overwhelmed, upset or anxious, allow yourself five minutes to take a break. If you are at work, step away from your desk, shut your office door, or take sanctuary in a restroom stall. Take five minutes to remove yourself from a situation. Silence your phone, close your eyes, and disconnect from the world. After your break, you can return to the previous situation a bit renewed and with new clarity. During your break, you can also go for a short walk. Just five minutes can change your environment and get the blood flowing. This has the added benefit of burning off some excess emotional energy.

Some people find solace in prayer and spiritual practice. Say a short prayer to ask for help or to express gratitude. This can have significant benefits. You might also read a passage of scripture or an inspirational book. These can also be accessed online if you don't have a physical text handy.

There are far too many forms of self-care to list here. I encourage you to learn more about self-care and find macro and micro level practices that work for you. You may not know what will work best; so, there may be some trial and error. Keep trying. Whether recently bereaved or just living life, self-care has an important role for us all.



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Faith & Hope Hospice and Palliative Care seeks to be the premier provider of hospice, palliative, and bereavement care in Los Angeles County and the surrounding areas.

Our goal is to improve the quality of life for people facing life-limiting and terminal illness, the people important to them, and our community at large by utilizing an interdisciplinary, holistic approach.



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