

A photograph of a garden path made of light-colored stones, winding through a lush green lawn. The path is bordered by various plants, including a large bush of pink flowers in the foreground and background. The scene is bright and sunny, with dappled light on the grass.

Through

Caring,

Renewal

Begins

Learning To Live Again

Coping With the Death of a Loved One

Dr. Earl A. Grollman

Someone you love very much has died.

Part of you has been lost with your loved one.

Pain and fear wash over you in waves.

You may hurt so much that you may
even want to die, too.

You wonder if you'll ever survive.



Grief

“Sorrow is like a toothache in your heart.”

~ Henrich Heine

Grief is an emotion, not a disease.

It is as natural as crying when you are hurt, eating when
you are famished, and sleeping when you are weary.

Grief is nature's way of healing a broken heart.

Grief Has No Timetable

Like fingerprints or snowflakes,
each person's grief is different.

The depth and scope depends on
your relationship with your loved one,
the support you are receiving, and your
ability to cope with stress.

Resolving grief often takes longer
than people expect.

The Work Of Mourning

*“Everyone can master
grief but he who has it.”*

~ Shakespeare

The only care for grief is to grieve.

There is no getting around the pain.

“Keeping your chin up” only misleads you
and others into a fake sense of security.

You have to work your way through.

You Are Not Crazy

Now that your loved one is dead, hopes, dreams, and security (perhaps of years) may no longer seem possible.

The situation may feel hopeless. You want to run away – anywhere. You go over and over in your mind imagining what your loved one felt or thought as he or she faced death.

You are drawn to the obituaries, reading of people the same age who died of the same kind of death. You wonder: “Wouldn’t it be easier to join my loved one in death than go through the pain of living alone?”

You are not mentally ill.

It takes time and effort to regain your ability to function more effectively.



Mourning

The Anatomy of

Grief can show itself in different ways. Sometimes you may be quiet and withdrawn; other moments, you can be hostile and out-of-control.

.....
Feel free to feel – whatever your emotions:
.....

“It can’t be true. It’s not happening to me. There must be some mistake.”

DISBELIEF serves as a buffer to the tragic shocking news.

“I feel like I’m in some kind of trance.”

NUMBNESS is nature’s insulation, cushioning you from the impact of your loved one’s death.

“How dare she die and leave me alone.”

Feelings of **HOSTILITY** are a normal response to the death of a loved one. Just remember, “nice” people do become angry.

“I feel so alone I could die.”

The most difficult moments may be those quiet times when you want to touch, talk, and share with your beloved. It’s natural to feel empty and **LONELY** as you are forced to adjust to new situations of life.

“It’s so hard being with people who have children the same age as my child would have been.”

How difficult it is to witness those families whose lives are intact! **JEALOUSY** is as old as Cain and Abel, Joseph and his brothers, David and Saul.



Grief

“I hear a familiar song on the radio and out of nowhere I begin to cry.”

TEARS – warm and wet – wash away feelings of frustration, sadness, anger, and quiet.

“Why did I? Why didn’t I?”

Few survivors escape without some feelings of **GUILT**. You may blame yourself for something you did or didn’t do for your beloved. But the past is behind you. Don’t spend the rest of your life punishing yourself.

“Thank God that his suffering is over.”

Perhaps with death you are spared further anxiety about the continued pain of your loved one. **RELIEF** doesn’t mean that you didn’t love sufficiently or that you are callous, unfeeling, or selfish.

“I have hit rock bottom.”

DEPRESSION is often defined as anger turned inward. You may feel helpless, hopeless, powerless. This terrible emotional period can create a host of physical problems as well. It is important to acknowledge your feelings and, if necessary, to seek further help.

To Seek Professional Help Or Not?

“Maybe I should speak to someone.”

There are dangers in prolonged depression and loneliness when you continually feel hostile toward people you once cared about,

you are uninterested in anything and everyone,

your health is suffering markedly,

you are relying more and more on drugs and/or alcohol,

you avoid all social activities, wishing to be alone most of the time,

you are preoccupied with thoughts of suicide.

It is important to express your feelings with someone trained in grief counseling.

Seeking professional help is not a sign of weakness, but your courageous resolve to take charge of yourself.

*A person is a person;
no matter how small.*



Children

Grieve Too

Don't pretend that life is unchanged.

One of the worst problems is youngsters' lack of understanding because of adult secrecy.

Let them see your grief.

Expressing your own feelings that are natural to the situation will provide the child with a basis for expressing his or her own feelings. Anger, guilt, despair and protest are as normal for the youngster as for you.

Encourage them to participate in the family sorrow.

Children, too, need to express their emotions through the ceremonies of death – the wake, the funeral, the “shivah”, the interment. Do not plan a one big “tell-all” but maintain a continuing dialogue. Explain in advance the funeral arrangements and give permission to attend. Be sensitive to the age and level of understanding of each child.

Avoid fairy tales and half-truths.

Distortions of reality can do lasting harm. Do not tell a youngster what he or she will later need to unlearn. Use simple and direct language.

Notify your child's school or day-care center.

An understanding teacher can offer extra support when informed of the crisis in the child's life.

Do not place unnecessary burdens upon the youngster.

The living child does not replace the dead sibling. When a parent dies, the youngster does not suddenly become the “man” or “woman” of the house. Children should be encouraged to be with their friends and become reinvolved in their usual activities.

Talk about the person who died.

The child needs to talk, not just to be talked to. Try to recall not only the sad moment of death, but the happy times shared together.

When words fail, touch.

Attitude can be more important than words. Your physical assurance of love and support is the greatest gift to a grieving child.



Recovery

From Grief

Accept your grief.

Expect the physical and emotional consequences of the death of your loved one. Grief is the price you pay for love.

Express your feelings.

Don't mask your despair: Cry when you have to; laugh when you can.

Be patient with yourself.

Your mind, and body, and soul need time and energy to mend. Grief is like weeding a flower bed in the summer. You may have to do it over and over again until the seasons change.

Monitor your health.

Eat as well as you can for your body needs nourishment after the physically grueling experience of grief. Depression can also be lightened by biochemical changes through proper exercise. Put balance back into your life with work and relaxation. Have a complete checkup and tell the physician about the loss in your life.

Avoid the abuse of alcohol and drugs.

Drugs and alcohol can sedate for the moment but ultimately can leave the nervous system in shreds. Altering the normal process of grief work, drugs can conceal legitimate emotions and create destructive problems.



Share the pain of your darkness with a friend or friends.

Don't withdraw from others. By your silence, you deny them the opportunity to share your inner self. Said Ralph Waldo Emerson: "*A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere.*"

Join a group of others who are grieving.

Learning about the experiences of others can offer invaluable insights into your own feelings with support, encouragement, and friendship.

You might seek solace from your religious faith.

Even if you ask, "How could God allow this to happen?" sorrow can be a spiritual pilgrimage. Religion is something you may wish to use—not to lose—during your bereavement with a wisdom that has nourished souls of humankind for untold generations. Just remember that grieving intensely is no more indication of a weak faith than grieving deeply is proof of a strong faith.

Help others.

By devoting your energies to people and causes, you learn to better relate to others, face reality, become more independent and let go of the past living in the present. "*Only the soul that knows the mighty grief can know the mighty rapture.*"

– Edwin Markham

Do what has to be done but delay major decisions.

Begin with the little things—a single chore that has to be accomplished. That can help restore your confidence. But wait (if you can) before deciding to immediately sell your house or change jobs. Thomas Carlyle said, "*Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance but to do what lies clearly at hand.*"

Determine to live again.

Readjustment does not come overnight. Make a start to put the stars back into your sky. Hold on to hope and keep trying. Resolve to survive each new day and to do your best.

An

Afterword



Never the same, but...

No, you're not the same person as before your loved one died. But you have memories that continue to touch you. You also have the rest of your life. What you do with it is now a matter of choice.

“We are not permitted to choose the frame of our destiny. But what we put into it is ours.”

~ Markings –Dag Hammarskjold

“Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.”

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Suggested Readings

Listed below are some suggested books to help people through the grief process. Some of the books may be available to borrow or purchase through your local funeral home.

Books by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Dr. Wolfelt is the author of many bestselling books and other resources on healing in grief for both caregivers and grieving people. He is the founder and Director of the Center for Loss, which supports mourners, by walking with them in their unique life journeys.

Understanding Your Suicide Grief

Companion Press, Fort Collins, CO; ISBN# 1879651580

A Child's View of Grief

Companion Press, Fort Collins, CO; ISBN# 1879651009

Companioning You! A Soulful Guide to Caring for Yourself While You Care for the Dying and the Bereaved

Companion Press, Fort Collins, CO; ISBN# 161722166X

Understanding Grief; Helping Yourself Heal

Routledge Press; ISBN# 1559590386

Dr. Wolfelt's 100 Practical Ideas Series:

Healing a Child's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas

Healing a Teen's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas for Families, Friends and Caregivers

Healing a Friend's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas

Healing Your Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas

Healing Your Holiday Grief: 100 Practical Ideas

Healing the Adult Child's Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas

Books by Rabbi Earl Grollman, DHL, DD

Dr. Earl A. Grollman is an internationally acclaimed pioneer in family crisis intervention. He is especially known for his research and writings on death. In 1987 he was awarded Person of the Year by the National Center for Death Education as "Counselor to the Bereaved." Among his books are:

Living – When A Loved One Has Died

Beacon Press, Boston; ISBN# 0807027197

Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers

Beacon Press, Boston; ISBN# 0807025011

Living When a Young Friend Commits Suicide or Even Starts Talking About It

Beacon Press, Boston; ISBN# 0807025038

Explaining Death to Children

Beacon Press, Boston; ISBN# 080702385X

Talking About Death: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child

Beacon Press, Boston; ISBN# 0807023612

Living with Loss, Healing with Hope: A Jewish Perspective

Beacon Press, Boston; ISBN# 0807028134

What Helped Me When My Loved One Died

Beacon Press, Boston; ISBN# 0807032298

Suggested Readings continue next page . . .

Books by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D.

A Swiss-born psychiatrist, humanitarian and co-founder of the hospice movement around the world, Kubler-Ross was the author of the groundbreaking book *On Death and Dying* (1969), which first discussed The Five Stages of Grief. She authored 24 books in 36 languages and brought comfort to millions of people coping with their own deaths or the death of a loved one.

On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss

Scribner; ISBN# 0743266293

Living with Death and Dying

Scribner; ISBN# 0684839369

To Live Until We Say Goodbye

Scribner; ISBN# 0684839482

By Therese A. Rando

Grieving: How to go on Living When Someone you loves Dies

Bantam; ISBN# 0553352695

Parental Loss of a Child

Research Pr Pub; ISBN# 0878222812

By Doug Manning

Memories Too Few: A Letter to Parents About Pregnancy Loss

By Doug Manning

Insight Books Inc.; ISBN# 9781892785732

By Doug Manning, Glenda Stansbury and Ted West

Thoughts for the Holidays:

Finding Permission to Grieve

In Sight Books; ISBN# 1892785404

By Judy Tattlebaum

The Courage to Grieve: The Classic Guide to Creative Living, Recovery, and Growth Through Grief

William Morrow Paperbacks; ISBN# 0060911859

By Susan Zopnebelt-Smeenge, Ed.D., and Robert De Vries, Ph.D.

The Empty Chair: Handling Grief on Holidays and Special Occasions

Baker Books; ISBN# 0801063779

By Lynn Bennett-Blackburn

The Class in Room 44: When a Classmate Dies

Centering Corp; ISBN# 1561230251

By William Koren

Helping Children Cope With the Loss of a Loved One: A Guide for Grownups

Free Spirit Publishing; ISBN# 1575420007

By Susan A. Berger

The Five Ways We Grieve: Finding Your Personal Path to Healing After the Loss of a Loved One

Trumpeter; ISBN# 1590308999

By Reverend Richard Gilber

Finding Your Way After Your Parent Dies: Hope for Grieving Adults

Ave Maria Press; ISBN# 0877936943

By H. Norman Wright

Reflections of a Grieving Spouse

Harvest House Publishers; ISBN# 0736926542

By Anne Brener

Mourning & Mitzvah: A Guided Journal for Walking the Mourner's Path Through Grief to Healing

Jewish Lights Publishing; ISBN# 1580231136

By Sherokee Ilse

Empty Arms: Coping With Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Death

Wintergreen Press, Inc.; ISBN# 0960945660

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Through Caring, Renewal Begins™

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