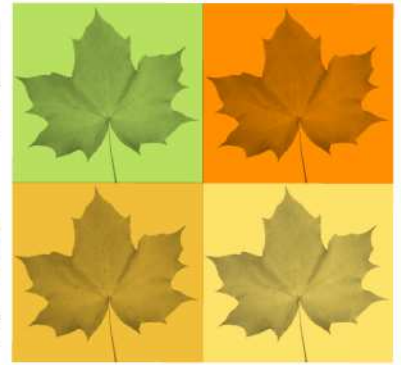


SEASONS

"Embracing the Seasons of Life."



January/February 2011

When someone we love dies, we are often confronted with many confusing and difficult feelings. The “roller coaster” of emotions may include feelings of loss, disbelief, anger, fear, guilt, loneliness, and anxiety. There is often a sensation of shock or numbness as the combination of emotions is just too much to understand and assimilate. This numbness is a gift. A protective shell helping to keep the mind from becoming totally overwhelmed by painful and vulnerable emotions.

This early gift of numbness enables us to get through the initial days. With time, shock begins to subside and is generally followed by an intense need to cry. Whether you are male or female, young or old, crying is an important element in bringing healing. People who are grieving, as well as those around them, can find crying disturbing. Our culture has taught us to judge crying to be a sign of weakness. “Adults don’t cry in public!” “I wish I wasn’t so emotional!” “Big boys don’t cry!” and neither do men. “She’s holding up so well!” we proclaim. These are just a few of the ways our culture devalues the healing power of tears.

Tears, however, are the first form of language that we use in this world. The cries of an infant or child help parents and caregivers provide appropriate care. In our adult life, the amount of crying each person needs to do varies and is influenced by many factors. The circumstances of the death, the kind and intensity of the relationship that was shared, changing responsibilities and circumstances, as well as the individual’s coping skills and emotional make-up, are all factors which influence the need to cry. Tears help us express what we need to say when it is beyond the scope of ordinary language.

Holding back our tears takes a lot of energy. In grief, that energy is needed for so many other things. If you do not allow tears to flow when they need to, you will find that they will continue to gather and the pressure will increase until what would have been a small trickle or stream becomes a raging torrent. Damned up for too long tears can become impossible to control. If you feel like you can’t stop crying, quit trying to stop! Allow yourself to cry; don’t hold back! Accept the gift of tears as a part of the grief work that will bring healing.

You may feel most comfortable crying alone or with one other person. Plan a time to cry alone before going out to be with others. Again, if you release the built-up tension of suppressed tears before going out, you will be focused on conversations and activities and not on controlling and holding back your tears. If you cannot cry, but wish you could, set aside a specific time each day to be alone. During that time, review your memories, read old letters, look through pictures, handle special items, listen to that “special” song or music, smell that familiar scent, or perhaps watch a sentimental movie which can help you tap into that deeply buried stream of life-giving tears.

In grief, remember: “Tears are not a luxury; they are a necessity!” (Anonymous)

Some myths and facts about grief:

Myth: it is important to “be strong” in the face of loss.

FACT: Feeling sad, frightened or lonely – or having other similar emotions- is a normal reaction to loss. Crying or breaking down doesn’t mean you are weak. You don’t need to “protect” your family or others by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings helps them and you.

Myth: the pain of loss will go away faster if you ignore it.

FACT: Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. Facing your grief and dealing with it actively is necessary for true healing.

Myth: If you don’t cry, it means you aren’t sorry about the loss.

FACT: Crying is a normal response to sorrow, but it is not the only one. Those who don’t cry may feel the pain of loss just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing or coping with it. They need just as much support and comfort from others.

Myth: Grief should last about a year.

FACT: There is no “right” time frame for grieving. How long it takes to recover from loss can differ widely from person to person.

Myth: moving on with your life means you’re forgetting the one you lost.

FACT: Moving on means you’ve accepted your loved one’s death. That’s not the same as forgetting. You can adjust to a new life while always keeping your loved one’s memory a part of you.

If you need to talk with one of our staff, privately, please call the nearest Diakon Hospice Saint John office. Please see attached calendar for upcoming Bereavement groups.

Diakon Hospice Saint John Pastoral Care and Bereavement Team

*Rev. Linda Williams
Allentown Area
(610) 391-2300
(888) 754-4608

*Rev Linda Haring
Wyomissing Area
(610) 320 – 7980
(610) 882-4530

*Rev. Peggy Sue Pfeffer
Hazleton Area
(570) 459-6778
(877) 438-3511

*Rev. Jane Mason
Honesdale Area
(570) 251-8712
(800) 622-3315

*Rev. Brian Kern
Bereavement Coordinator
Allentown/Wyomissing Area
(888) 754-4608*

*Rev. Tom Neuviller
Bereavement Coordinator
Hazleton/Honesdale Area
(800) 622-3315*

MISSION In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries will demonstrate God's command to love the neighbor through acts of service.



www.diakon.org/hospice

Please remember if you are feeling cut off and alone in your pain, we are here to listen; we do care.
(IN THE CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE TO CONFIRM)

ALLENTOWN AREA
Grief Support Group Meetings

Bereavement support is provided by the Allentown chaplain and Diakon Family Life Services. Please contact Chaplain Linda Williams at (610) 391-2308 for information about grief support groups being held in your area.

WYOMISSING
Grief Support Group Meeting

Bereavement support is provided by the Wyomissing chaplain and Diakon Family Life Services. Please contact Chaplain Coleen Kristula at (610) 320-7980 or Family Life Services at (888) 499-2699 for information about grief support groups being held in your area.

HAZLETON AREA
Grief Support Group Meetings

Bereavement support is provided by the Hazleton chaplain and Diakon Family Life Services. For more information about grief support groups being held in your area, please contact Rev. Peggy Sue Pfeffer at (570) 459-6778.

Hazleton: Drop – in support group: The first Monday of the month from 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall of Annunciation Roman Catholic Parish, 122 S. Wyoming Street, Hazleton PA.

Up-coming dates January 3, February 7, March 7, and April 4, 2011.

HONESDALE
Grief Support Group Meeting

Bereavement support is provided by the Honesdale chaplain and Diakon Family Life Services. For more information on Grief Support Groups in this area, please contact Rev. Jane Mason at (57) 251-8712 or (800) 622-3315.

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 **DIAKON HOSPICE SAINT JOHN**
A LUTHERAN FAMILY & COMMUNITY MINISTRY
www.diakon.org/hospice

Heavy
from *Thirst* by Mary Oliver

That time
I thought I could not
go any closer to grief
without dying

I went closer,
and I did not die.
surely God
had His hand in this,

as well as friends.
Still, I was bent,
and my laughter,
as the poet said,

was nowhere to be found.
Then said my friend Daniel
(brave even among lions),
"It's not the weight you carry

but how you carry it –
books, bricks, grief –
it's all in the way
you embrace it, balance it, carry it,

when you cannot, and would not,
put it down."
So I went practicing.
Have you noticed?

Have you heard
the laughter
that comes, now and again,
out of my startled mouth?

Making it through the Holidays and approaching a New Year can be difficult at any time in life's journey for any number of reasons, even with out the loss of a loved one. Finding our way through grief - while at the same time facing a New Year - may seem like an overwhelming journey into January 2011. Donna O'Toole writes in *Facing Change: Falling Apart and Coming Together Again*: "Finding our way through grief is a lot like making a tapestry. A tapestry is a design or picture created by weaving many different threads together. The threads that make up a tapestry are of different textures and colors. As we grieve, memories of the past – or our losses – are gradually being gathered up, reclaimed and woven together into the present. Eventually a pattern emerges: a picture that shows that our past and present have been united.

To appreciate the art of tapestry is to look at it from both sides. The back can tell us of our brokenness...when we study the front of the tapestry we see something quite different...we see the connections...patterns...shapes...might even see beauty."

May there be surprises of beauty in the New Year as your carry, embrace, balance, practice the art of weaving a new life in the New Year.

How I linger
to admire, admire, admire
the things of this world
that are kind, and maybe

also troubled –
roses in the wind,
the sea geese on the steep waves,
a love
to which there is no reply?