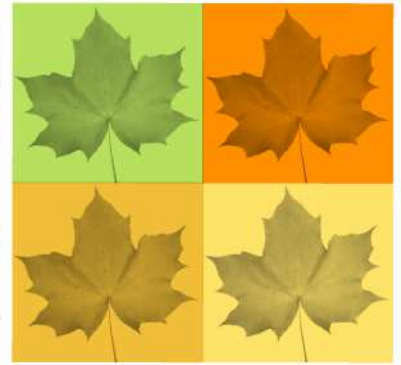


SEASONS

"Embracing the Seasons of Life."



July/August 2010

We all experience grief, but none of us experience grief in exactly the same way. Our reactions are as unique and individual as we are. Some may grieve a spouse, others a parent, child, sibling, or friend. The uniqueness of these relationships influences how we experience our grief. Some may have been close relationships; others may have had tension or conflict. Circumstances differ: sometimes a loss is sudden while others follow a prolonged illness.

In the process of grieving a loved one there are many emotions. Feelings of sadness, longing for that person's presence, jealousy of those who have not experienced our profound loss, or even relief that a prolonged illness has ended. The process of grieving takes a lot of time and effort. Grieving consists of coping with memories and emotions, as well as attending to the myriad of details of sorting and settling material possessions. Grief is Work!

Our culture pushes us to find the quick and easy path. We hurry through our pain as quickly as possible, foregoing the difficult part of grief and sailing on to recovery. Grief is a process we must move through, not over or around. Our grief work may take us into unfamiliar territory. Even in familiar surroundings of home and work, family and friends, we find ourselves ill-prepared for this new life. "Who am I, now?" is the oft asked question by Paul Alexander in his song of the same title. The chorus asks:

Who am I now without you?
 Who will I turn out to be?
 I stand alone, I'm broken in two.
 Does anyone realize how much
 I'm missing you?

As we take time to grieve we realize that life will be different and sometimes difficult. We need to be gentle with ourselves as we explore this new reality. The loss of our loved one changes our identity. We once were part of a couple as husband and wife, parent and child, siblings or friends. The loss of this relationship challenges our sense of who we are. Loneliness is just one of the emotions that bubbles during grief.

Dr. William Sadler, an authority on loneliness in American life, points out two kinds of loneliness: "intimate" and "social". Intimate loneliness is the result of being cut off from a significant and beloved person. While this is most often associated with a spouse, it also relates to parent, child, or best friend relationships. It is the loss of the person with whom you have shared your most personal and intimate thoughts and feelings. While death is the ultimate break in a relationship, moves and conflicts can also cause the loss of intimacy and lead to loneliness.

Social loneliness is the result of separation from groups with which you had close ties and interests. Often the loss of an intimate relationship also changes a person's social standing. You may no longer be part of a pair. You may have lost your spouse, sibling, parent or child. After initial help, social friends usually continue with their own lives and interests, leaving the grieving person alone. Co-workers, friends, neighbors, and even family members may avoid the person in emotional pain because they do not know what to say or do to help ease the hurt. Others may withdraw because they, too, are hurting.

Loneliness often leads to isolation. Those who are hurting recognize they are not much fun to be around, and so they withdraw. Being with others who have their loved ones around intensifies the awareness of the loss, and the grieving person tends to further withdraw. The temptation is to stay at home with only the TV or radio for company. A person who is lonely and withdrawing may find they are spending more and more time in bed.

What can ease the pain of loneliness? The person who helped bring value and meaning to your life is gone. There is no reason for you not to value yourself. You are special. Go gently. Don't rush too much. Your body needs energy for repair.

Eat well. Good nutrition is important. Decrease junk food. Eat a balanced meal.

Get enough sleep.

Exercise. It offers an opportunity to work off frustration and it aids sleep. Physical activity helps lessen stress. Remember, your body and your mind work together.

Be patient with yourself. Healing takes time.

Talk about your loved one. Join a support group where you are not seen as "poor ____, whose loved one died." You are seen as someone seeking to share. Shared sorrows, shared experiences, and shared solutions can bring comfort and spark new friendships and interests.

Do something for someone else. Helping others does much to ease the pain.

Choose to be among people you enjoy. Don't feel guilty if you have a good time. Your loved one would want you to be happy.

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

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

Please remember if you are feeling cut off and alone in your pain, we are here to listen; we do care.

ALLENTOWN AREA

(IN THE CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE TO CONFIRM)

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

(IN THE CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE TO CONFIRM)

Grief Support Group Meeting

Bereavement support is provided by Diakon Family Life Services. Please contact Chaplain Colleen Kristula at (610) 320-7980 or Family Life Services at (888) 499-2699 for the latest information on the location of these groups.

HAZLETON AREA

(IN THE CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE TO CONFIRM)

Grief Support Group Meetings

These information gatherings are open to all those who are grieving. There is no cost, however, registration is required. For more information or to register for a Grief Support Group please contact Rev. Peggy Sue Pfeffer at (570) 459-6778.

We've said previously, talking about death and grief is a challenging topic even for adults, much less children. And that children will experience the same kinds of strong emotions, feelings, and questions that adults do. Yet they will indeed experience them on a different scale; a widely varying scale directly related to their age and ability to understand death. With all of that in mind, I would like to review a few tools that I have found to be helpful for families over the years.

The first is a booklet entitled *Helping Your Child Grieve*, designed to help parents take on this challenging responsibility. You can get it from the Channing Bete Publishing Company (www.channing-bete.com). It's strength is that it stresses throughout that children should be given every opportunity to experience and express their grief, and emphasizes that it should be done in a safe and secure environment with plenty of support and attention. I would also recommend it's discussion of how children grieve, broken down into a half-dozen different age groups, as a useful tool for zeroing in on your own child's grief experience. Keep in mind, however, that every child is different and may not experience grief exactly as described here in the different age groups indicated. It goes on from there to describe age appropriate ways in which you might help your child grieve and then answers common questions about saying goodbye, funerals, keeping their memories alive, and more. Finally, it lists alternative sources of help for both you and your child, after all, you need support too.

In conclusion, I would also recommend two other resources that go hand in hand with the first. *When Someone You Love Dies* is an activity and coloring book designed to encourage your younger child to express their grief. *Working Through Grief; A Self-Care Handbook* is resource designed for older children, teenagers, and adults. It gives a good over-view of the grieving process, validates the emotions and feelings they have, and dispels common grief myths. It has interactive exercises to help with coping and encourages and stimulates journaling as a means of expression and developing a plan for healing. Both are also available from Channing Bete Publishing Company.

In conclusion, remember that your child can work through grief – with your help. Grief, is a part of his or hers healing process.

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.

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