

Loss in the First Year & Beyond

Navigating feelings

Common Thoughts

-‘I regret so much that we left so many things unsettled and not talked about.’

-‘If only I had insisted that she/he get help earlier. She/he might be alive now if I had been more firm.’

-‘I feel badly that I was sometimes impatient and short with her/him toward the end. I was so tired. I didn’t seem to have control over my own words and actions at times. I wish I had done better.’

-‘And now there are times when I’m angry at her/him, and at life, for what has happened. She/he has left me with a lot of things to do, and I don’t even know how to do them. And on top of it all, I feel guilty about being angry.’

-‘I sometimes wonder if God knows and cares about me and what I’m going through. I even find myself getting angry with God, or wondering if there really is a God.’

Important Things to Remember

These are some of the thoughts and feelings that come over people when going through a difficult time of grief. It is important to know that it is not at all uncommon for us to have these experiences. We are not unusual; it shows we are normal human beings.

The thoughts and feelings of loss, uncertainty, and helplessness that often come with the loss of those close to us are often also accompanied by thoughts and feelings like regret, guilt, anger, depression, etc. It is a lot to handle.

Those Hard to Handle Thoughts & Feelings

FIRST, we can own our thoughts and feelings—that is, identify and acknowledge them. If we own the thinking and feeling as really belonging to us, we are less likely to run into trouble than if we push them down and deny them.

SECOND, we can work at being accepting and forgiving of ourselves.

THIRD, we can examine our thinking to see if it really makes sense. It helps to realize that our thinking and believing are the source of our feelings. Even when we have done the best we could under very difficult circumstances, we still can still be hard on ourselves.

FOURTH, if we conclude that we really have something to feel guilty about, we can talk it over with a trusted friend or counselor. If we have a religious faith that we live by, we can talk with God about it or seek counsel.

FIFTH, we can “talk” with the one who died. We can imagine them present with us, and say to them what we need to say. Try to imagine what they might say back to us. This practice may help to settle old, unfinished business, and to work through hard to handle ideas and feelings.

SIXTH, we can give ourselves time to work through our complicated thoughts and emotions. Remember that grief is difficult for all of us. We can show consideration for ourselves by not expecting too much too soon.

FINALLY, and most importantly, be open with ourselves and a few others about what we are going through. Especially, talking with others who have gone through times of loss may be very helpful.

Find What Works for You

- Think of something you want that is available, then make a plan to get it.
- Go for a long walk or work out.
- Think of people who bring you up. Call one of them.
- Listen to your favorite music.
- Sing or chant.
- Do something creative.
- Take a shower or a long, warm bath.
- Make a list of your strengths.
- Love a pet expressively.
- Think of something you can do for someone, then do it.
- Read a good book.
- Dance.
- Forgive someone.
- Consult a nutrition book and consider what you might add to your diet for pep and vitality.
- Plan a trip or event that you think you would enjoy.
- Choose an enjoyable way of relaxing.
- Make an appointment for a massage.
- Begin something you have been putting off for a long time.
- Stop doing everything and just BE for a while.
- Make a list of things you are grateful for.
- Scream!
- Think of a goal that will bring you joy.
- Arrange a meeting with your favorite person.
- Give something away.
- Plan a surprise for someone.
- Do breathing exercises for energy and calmness.
- Clean up something.
- Make a list of things you feel guilty about, consider where you can make amends-then burn the list.

St. Francis Reflections Grief Support Program

St. Francis Reflections Lifestage Care supports and assists those who are grieving as they process through their grief and healing period. We are committed to providing a comprehensive program available to any Brevard County resident in need of grief support.

Our program offers a variety of services listed below:

- * Individual and/or family grief support
- * Spiritual support and pastoral counseling
 - * Grief support groups
- * Grief support information and literature
 - * Community resource information

St. Francis Reflections Lifestage Care also offers North Star, a specialized program for grieving children, teens, and their families. Through play and talk with each other, the children have the power to help themselves heal and help each other in the healing process.

How to Contact St. Francis Reflections Grief Program

To learn more about the Grief Program and current monthly schedule of group meetings, social events, and memorial events, please contact the grief coordinators at 321-269-4240.

To learn more about the Children's Grief Program for grieving children, please contact the Program Coordinator at 321-264-1687.

