

Loss in the First Year & Beyond

Facing grief and letting go

‘Letting go’ is the slow process of moving forward in a way that allows you to see what life still has to offer and release some of the painful associations related to loss. Returning to the life you once knew is a challenging and emotional task. It is sometimes difficult to see the way forward. The process of letting go offers healing and enables you to cross the bridge that leads you to reestablish yourself and your relationship with others.

The process of letting go began the moment you realized you experienced an enormous loss and the emotions connected to that loss are real. Every tear, moment of anger, guilt, or frustration are signs of a normal grieving process. Even if you think you are through the worst of it, you may experience repeated moments of intense sadness and grief. That’s okay. It just means you needed more time to let your heart grieve before you can pursue your life again. Give yourself extra time to wrestle with the unanswerable ‘why’ questions. You may need this in order to truly accept the loss and learn to let go.

Consider reaching out to others and sharing this process with someone, whether a friend, family member or professional. True acceptance happens when you are able to form a bond with another person. Whoever you choose to create a bond with, you will find that it strengthens your well-being and help the healing process. You may also find that with these new bonds, meaning and purpose return to your life.

One of the unique features of grief is that it often enables growth through the heartache. Though your life may never be exactly the same again, you have an opportunity to create a new you and to grow from this experience. You may want to use this as chance to create something or try something new. Who do you want to be? How can you honor your loved one on a daily basis?

Letting go is an important turning point in the process of grief. It does not mean you walk away from your loss or the memories of your loved one. What it does mean is that it is time to accept the loss you have experienced, find healthy ways to incorporate the loss in your life, and find strength to move on to become a stronger person.



10 Suggestions to Help Overcome Grief

1. **Take time to ACCEPT DEATH** – Facing and accepting death remains a necessary condition for continuing our own life.
2. **Take time to LET GO** – Letting go means adjusting to a new reality in which the deceased is no longer present. Letting go occurs when we are able to accept whatever feelings such as anger, guilt, fear and/or sadness accompany death. Letting go occurs when we tolerate the feelings to wait, trust and hope again.
3. **Take Time to MAKE DECISIONS** – It is important that the bereaved be patient with themselves and gradually make decisions as a way to control and sustain self-worth.
4. **Take time to SHARE** – The greatest need of the bereaved is to have someone share their pain, their memories, and their sadness.
5. **Take time to BELIEVE** – For many people, religion offers a comforting and strengthening base in the lonely encounter with helplessness and hopelessness.
6. **Take time to FORGIVE** – We need to accept our imperfections, not torture ourselves for the things we did or did not do.
7. **Take time to FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF** – Exploring new interests, developing hobbies, and taking advantage of new opportunities are all activities designed to help the bereaved reinvest their energies in new endeavors.
8. **Take time to MEET NEW FRIENDS** – Healing occurs when we move out of our safe boundaries and interact with others. New friends will be there to offer opportunities. Join a support group, a club, or take a class.
9. **Take time to LAUGH** – Laughter helps us survive and re-enter life.
10. **Take time to GIVE** – The best way to overcome loneliness and grief is to be concerned about the pain of others. If we find someone like us, that will be our opportunity for healing. Get involved with others.

With Healing Comes New Life

Any major injury to the physical body causes pain and suffering. A patient's total being needs time and extensive therapy in order to face life again as he or she knew it. Exercise can be painfully tedious and the injured patient does not want to endure the discomfort even though it means the road to recovery. As treatment continues, the mind responds. Healing brings strength and wellness to the whole body. Balance is restored to life their life.

Experiencing the loss of a loved one also causes intense pain and suffering as sit touched every part of the body. The emotional injuries require special therapy in order for the survivor to face life again. Time and a good support system carry the survivor through much of the grieving process. But the greatest advancement comes when the survivor alone recognizes and accepts his or her loss. With this difficult moment behind, the sadness ebbs and the healing process begins.

The most important thread of healing in families came when they were able to allow their loved one to become an ongoing part of their life experience. They continued to find joy in remembering the special times they had shared together. Although it was painful, with practice they developed a different and meaningful relationship with their loved one. The memories fade but never go away. The sun begins to shine. With healing comes a new life. May the healing of the peace come to you.



The Elephant in the Room

There's an elephant in the room.
It is large and squatting, so it is hard to get around it.
Yet we squeeze by with, "How are you?"
and "I'm fine..."
And a thousand other forms of trivial chatter.

We talk about the weather
We talk about work,
We talk about everything else except
the elephant in the room.
There's an elephant in the room
we all know it is there.

We are thinking about the elephant
as we talk together.
It is constantly on our minds.
For, you see, it is a very big elephant.
It has hurt us all.
But we do not talk about the elephant in the room.

Oh please, say her name.
Oh please, say "Barbara" again.
Oh please let's talk about the elephant in the room.
For if we talk about her death,
perhaps we can talk about her life?
Can I say "Barbara" to you
and not have you look away?

For if I cannot, then you are leaving me,
Alone... In a room...
With an elephant.



By: Terry Ketterin

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 Support

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 Support Program, please contact the Program Coordinator at 321-264-1687.

