

Loss in the First Year & Beyond

Healing and grief

My Old Friend Grief

Grief has taught me a few things about living that I would not have learned on my own. He has taught me that if I try to deny the reality of a major loss in my life I end up having to deny life altogether. He has taught me that although pain of loss is great, I must confront it and experience it fully or risk emotional paralysis.

Old grief has taught me that I can survive even great loss and although my world is different it is still my world and I must live in it. He has taught me that when I let go, I can flourish again in season and bring forth the good fruit that comes, not in spite of my loss, but because of it.

My old friend Grief has taught me that the loss of a loved one does not mean the loss of love. Love is stronger than separation and longer than the permanence of death. My old friend Grief may leave me for a while, but he will be back again to remind me to confront my new reality and to gain through loss and pain.

Adolfo Quezada, TFC, Grand Junction, CO



Finding Healing

When a person has a major injury to their body, it causes physical pain and suffering. In order to return to normalcy, the injured patient must know that healing takes time and effort. Rehabilitation exercises may seem tiresome and uncomfortable, but it is necessary for the road to recovery. As time passes and the individual remains committed to treatment, the body and the mind respond. The body and mind start to experience healing. Strength and well-being are slowly restored to the entire body.

Similarly, the loss of a loved one can be just as intense as a major injury. It causes pain and suffering that can be felt physically in the body as well as the mind and soul. Emotional injuries require a different kind of therapy that address emotional needs. This may look like finding a good support system, whether friends, support groups, or a counselor. Find people who can help with talking through emotions and thoughts related to the loss. This can lead to an important step in the journey to healing: acceptance. When you are able to recognize and accept the loss you have experienced, healing truly begins. Like a physical injury, emotional healing can be a slow process that happens over a long period of time. Be patient and kind to yourself. Celebrate the small signs of progress.

One of the best ways to find healing is allowing your loved one to be an ongoing part of your life. Find joy in sharing stories of the times you shared together. Do things to honor his/her legacy. Remember the lessons they taught you and consider how you can pass it on to others. With practice, you will begin to see that your relationship with your loved one has not ended, but changed in a meaningful way. The pain you once felt will start to heal and you will find strength in your mind, body, and soul.

What Do We Need During Grief?

TIME

Time alone; and time with whom you trust and who will listen when you talk. You need months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings that go along with loss.

REST – RELAXATION – EXERCISE – NOURISHMENT – DIVERSION

You may need extra amounts of things you needed before. Hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a “cause” to work for to help others – any of these may give you a lift. Grief is an exhausting process emotionally. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people and things you love.

SECURITY

Try to reduce or find help for financial or other stresses in your life. Allow yourself to be close to those you trust. Getting back into a routine helps. You may need to allow yourself to do things at your own pace.

HOPE

You may find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them and realizing that they have recovered, and time does help; may give you hope that sometime in the future your grief will be less raw and painful.

CARING

Try to allow yourself to accept the expressions of caring from others even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or close relative also suffering the same loss may bring a feeling of closeness with the person.

GOALS

For a while, it will seem that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month, helps you to get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a rule of thumb. At first don't be surprised if your enjoyment of these things isn't the same. This is normal. As time passes you may need to work on some longer range goals to give some structure and direction to your life. You may need guidance or counseling to help with this.

SMALL PLEASURES

Do not underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures as you are ready. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food – all are small steps toward regaining your pleasure in life itself.

PERMISSION TO BACKSLIDE

Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair or anger. This is often the nature of grief – up and down – and it may happen over and over for a time. It happens because as humans, we cannot take in all the pain and the meaning of death at once. So, we let it in a little at a time.



A New Beginning

A lost loved one would not want you to spend the rest of your life grieving. He or she would want you to grow and continue to live – really live – not just exist. So, think about beginning, what shall the first 'something nice' be? A new hairdo? Learning golf? Or a fishing trip or vacation?

What have you always wanted to do and did not have time for or maybe you had the time but your loved one did not share your wish, so you put it off. Why not do it now? Can you afford it? Even if it is difficult, try to find a way to do it.

It does not have to be big – start little. Maybe it will take practice. But it will feel good and that is what is important. And you will be taking a BIG step (even though it may feel like a little one) on the way to getting going again.

And most important – you will be taking charge of you, not depending on others, doing something on your own behalf. It works! Try it. You may like it.

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.



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.