

# Grief Support Newsletter



## St. Francis Reflections Grief Support Program

St. Francis Reflections 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.

The Grief Program consists of a variety of grief support activities, including adult programs, social activities, and community events.

St. Francis Reflections 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



## Survivor’s Bill of Rights

I have the right to be free of guilt.



I have the right not to feel responsible for the death.



I have the right to express my feelings and emotions, even if they do not seem acceptable, as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others.



I have the right not to be deceived because others feel they can spare me further grief.



I have the right to maintain a sense of hopelessness.



I have the right to peace and dignity.



I have the right to retain my individuality and not be judged.



I have the right to seek counseling and a support group to enable me to explore my feelings to further the acceptance process.



I have the right to reach acceptance.



I have the right to a new beginning.



I have the right to be.

By John C. Mecca, Center for Inner Growth and Wholeness, Wethersfield, CT

# Grief: A Normal and Natural Response to Loss

## Grief Misconceptions

Starting in childhood many people have been taught to face life's crises with a "still upper lip" to 'bear up and be strong.' As we are influenced by these subconscious messages, we may become fearful that any show of emotion, particularly tears, might be interpreted by others as a sign of weakness (e.g...He's falling apart,' or she's going to pieces.')

One of the tragedies in our society today is that many bereaved family members and friends experience their grief alone, feeling, 'There must be something wrong with me. Certainly no one I know ever felt or behaved in these strange ways.' Fearful of embarrassment or of appearing 'crazy' to others, many bereaved persons hide their true feelings of grief.

It is important for you to realize that what you are experiencing is a normal, natural and expected response to the loss of a significant person in your life.



## Common Grief Reactions

Your grief reaction may manifest itself in any one of the following ways described by other bereaved persons:

**"I feel sick to my stomach. I just can't eat."**

**"I have trouble getting to sleep and after I finally do I only sleep for a few hours before I'm up again."**

Other Physical reactions include weakness, pounding and/or heavy feeling in the chest and/or shortness of breath."

**"I can't seem to get organized. I'm up and down a hundred times during the day-here and there never accomplishing anything."**

**"I keep thinking about how it all happened-over and over again in my mind. I guess I'm trying to make sense out of it all."**

**"I think I'm losing my mind. I can't concentrate on anything. I can't even decide what to wear today."**

Other mental manifestations include a lack of initiative, forgetfulness and anxiety. Other emotional reactions include feelings of relief, anguish, depression and/or unexpected and uncontrolled crying.

**"I thought this would bring us closer together, instead we constantly bicker."**

**"When I'm feeling up he's depressed: when he's up, I'm down."**

Other social reactions include a tendency to respond to others with anger or irritability and/or a loss of spontaneity.

**"If my faith were stronger, I would be able to handle this."**

**"If I really believed, this wouldn't have happened."**

Other Spiritual reactions include anger with God and/or doubts about God's existence.

## Keeping a Personal Journal

### Keeping a Personal Journal

The systematic use of an ongoing diary or journal can be one of the most useful ways to maintain self-development. A thoughtfully done journal can provide a structure to promote paying closer attention to our lives and encouraging development, and evolution in our understanding of self and others.

Writing fosters an inner reflection and can chart day by day journeys evoking cognitive and emotional stimulation, growth of personal coping skills and self-awareness, which many otherwise seek from the outside world.

Over time you will find that your writing has allowed you to effectively define problem areas, work through problems and bring about resolution and personal growth.

As you continue to move into the future, your journal can offer a document that can be referred back to when you encounter a similar problem or you are asked to help a friend or loved one with a problem that you can relate to.

Writing by hand can also improve memory, relieve stress, inspire creativity and feel meditative...just to name a few.

### The Outcome of Journal Writing

You may find it helpful to work through your thoughts about your loved one by writing down your feelings in a journal or in a letter.

If you choose to write a letter to the person who died, it can allow you to express your thoughts and feelings in a more direct way. Then, after you have written letter and are ready to let it go, you can take it out to the beach in bottle, put it afloat in one of your loved ones favorite spots on a lake, burn it sacredly, or bury it somewhere meaningful etc.

Choose one or several of the ideas that you can relate to, or simply start at the top of the list and work your way down. These topics are simply ideas to help you get started and come up with your own that are more specific to your personal situation and the unique relationship you shared with your loved one.

### Ideas for Journal Writing

A few ideas to get you started on your writing:

- Pull from a special memory that you have about your loved one.
- Share what you miss the most about your loved one and the relationship you shared.
- When you might be struggling with a decision and the person gone is whom you would normally ask – ask them anyway.
- Experiences that you are so grateful you got to share, and maybe one or two you wish you had been able to share but never got the chance.
- What you have recognized being the hardest to deal with in regards to your loss.
- Ways you recognize how your loved one continues to live on; in you, in their children, in experiences you have, things in nature that remind you of them, randomly hearing their favorite song, etc.
- Special ways and things you do that keep your loved one alive, create new traditions, for example: remember something they may have mentioned wanting to try and try it for them, if they brought a tradition to your relationship that may have been compromised out considering bringing it back.