



Schuler-Lefebvre
FUNERAL CHAPEL

Dedicated To Those We Serve

Caring Connections:

Good Grief!

There is a good chance that when you have given any thought to grief it is usually in negative terms. A woman said to me recently, "I hate feeling this way!" Most people do. Grief is such a mix of intense emotions that most people wish they could be over it within a month of the funeral. However, it is important to understand that recovery from the death of a loved one does not happen quickly. It also helps to understand what things help and what things hinder our recovery. There is such a thing as good or bad grief. First let's look at what is not helpful when you are grieving.

What Doesn't Help?

Other problems in your life.

Are there sickness, financial problems or relationship difficulties? Anything that takes up a lot of time or energy that should be going towards resolving your grief is a liability. If you can deal with some of these issues, it may be that your grief will seem less threatening. Feeling alone and abandoned. Feeling alone in your grief is quiet common. Often friends don't know what to say and if they knew the person who died, they may also be grieving and may be unable to offer you much help. You need someone to talk to. It is important not to be alone.

Multiple loss.

If you have had a number of deaths or other losses it may be difficult to sort out what or who you are mourning. If this is the case, your grieving will be more difficult.

An inability to make sense of it all.

If you are unable to explain or understand this death, it will be more difficult for you. If you can put this death into perspective and make some sense out of it, it helps. Ask yourself questions like: "Is there anything for me to learn? How have I changed as a result of this? Does this death make me think about my own life and changes I should make?"

A socially unacceptable death.

If someone dies of a death to which society attaches a stigma, then the family members may not receive the support they need. This is often true if a person dies of suicide, AIDS, or is murdered.

Unfinished business.

Are there things you wish you had said to the person who died or are there things you could have done? Dealing with unfinished business is difficult after the person has died. However, with the help of a counsellor this can be worked through.

Continued...

Now let's look at what will help you move through your grief successfully.

What Helps?

-Someone to talk to. It is important to find someone you can talk to about how you are feeling and how you are progressing. Don't be surprised if this person isn't in your family. They often aren't. Bereavement Support Groups are one of the most helpful means of finding others who understand. Talking with your doctor, clergy or funeral director may also help.

-Be patient. In a world of bank machines, drive-through restaurants and the Internet, patience is a virtue many of us lack. There are still some things that don't happen instantly. Recovery from the death of a loved one is one of them. Be patient with yourself. Give yourself time.

- Look after yourself. Make sure you are eating properly, getting plenty of rest and exercising regularly. If you do these things you will be better able to cope with your grief. Treat yourself occasionally. Listen to your favorite music. Eat a whole box of chocolates if you feel like it! Take time to do nothing if that's what you want to do.

-Practice good grief. Don't be afraid to cry. Express your feelings and frustrations. If you are having a bad day, just ride with your feelings. If you try to avoid them, they will be there another day. Feel sad today and tomorrow you will feel better.

-Embrace your grief. Grief can be a great teacher and lead you into a new understanding of life. Feel the pain. Listen to your inner voice and gradually you will move into healing and renewal.

- Face the loss realistically. What was lost? Did you have a good relationship with the person who died or are you just as happy he or she is dead? Don't try to put a happy twist on something or someone that wasn't a happy part of your life. Grieve the real losses, not imaginary ones.

- Begin to plan for your future. In the first weeks and months following the death of a loved one, you won't feel like thinking about the future. But when you feel like it, let it happen. Imagine you are running a race and your loved one is cheering you on from the stands! Make plans for the future and you will have a future.

- Draw on the resources of your faith. What helps you make sense out of life? Listen to the words of your spirituality or religion. What comforts you? If you have questions, ask them. Rainer Maria Rilke wrote, "Live the questions now.

Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."

Continued...

The following credo was written to help you understand grief, in a few words.

CREDO

I believe grief is a process that involves a lot of time, energy and determination.

I won't "get over it" in a hurry, so don't rush me!

I believe grief is intensely personal. This is my grief. Don't tell me how I should be doing it.

Don't tell me what's right or what's wrong. I'm doing it my way, in my time.

I believe grief is affecting me in many ways. I am being affected spiritually, physically, emotionally, socially and mentally. If I'm not acting like my old self, it's because I'm not my old self and some days even I don't understand myself.

I believe I will be affected in some way by this loss for the rest of my life. As I get older, I will have new insights into what this death means to me. My loved one will continue to be part of my life and influence me until the day I die.

I believe I am being changed by this process. I see life differently. Some things that were once important to me aren't any more. Some things I used to pay little or no attention to are now important.

I think a new me is emerging, so don't be surprised and don't stand in the way.

John Kennedy Saynor

Suggested Additional Reading

Grollman, Earl A. *Living When A Loved One Has Died*.

Boston: Beacon Press, 1977.

Menten, Ted. *Going Solo*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1995.

Rando, Terese A. *How to Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1988.

Temes, Roberta. *Living With An Empty Chair*. New York: New Horizon Press Publishers, 1992.

Good Grief! is one in the "Growing Through Grief" series. Other titles in this series are:

When Your Parent Dies

How Do Dead People Get Chocolate Cake?

Anticipatory Grief: What is it?

When Your Spouse Dies

My Child has Died!

The Grieving Family

The Grief That Can't be Spoken: AIDS, Murder, Suicide, Divorce

When a Young Friend Dies

I Can't Face the Holidays!