



GRIEF - LOSSES, by JOYCE GREGG RN, RSW

I have personally experienced many losses during my lifetime. When I was age 13, my mother fell on the ice, hit her head and died within 12 hours. I have had many relatives, family members and friends die or experience serious health problems.

There is also a broader framework for losses: When I was 22 my first husband died of an aneurysm, he died beside me in bed. I have also experienced losses in regard to moving from one community to another; these included, our community and church, friends, our home and neighbourhood and our work.

Although I am fortunate and grateful to be in good health, there are changes that come with aging: my eyesight and hearing are not as sharp as they were, my bones and joints are not as flexible and my energy is less. I have lost a few pets who were a great source of love, company and relaxation and were some of my best friends.

I have a particular interest in being able to do grief work. I think I bring some understanding because of my life experiences. Because of my personal need and interest, I have attended a number of Grief Work shops, and have read many books on Grief. I will share some of the things I have learned in addition to some of my personal experiences.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt, PhD. did a workshop in Saint John in October, 1994. He has written a number of books and was a very effective communicator. "Grief is the thoughts and feelings that are experienced within oneself upon the death of a loved one the internal experience. Mourning is wearing one's grief outside oneself."

Dr. Wolfelt wrote about some myths. There are definitely some different concepts now about what is helpful. In 1969, Dr. Kubler-Ross' book on Death and Dying spoke about 5 stages. This was never intended to be literally interpreted. It is now known that it is helpful to have a natural unfolding of the mourner's personal experience. Each person's grief is uniquely his/her own. The attitude that Dr. Wolfelt felt was most effective is: "Teach me about your grief and I will be with you." Allow that person to tell you where he/she is in the process of grieving.

Our society encourages people to prematurely move away from the grief instead of towards it. It is through the process of moving towards pain that we move towards eventual healing. Everyone is changed by the experience of grief. For the mourner to assume that life will be exactly the same as it was prior to the death is unrealistic and potentially damaging. Dr. Wolfelt believes that the term "reconciliation" is more expressive of what occurs as the person works to integrate the new reality of moving forward in life without the physical presence of the person who has died - with time and support, "a renewed sense of energy and confidence, an ability to fully acknowledge the reality of the death and the capacity to become re-involved with the activities of the living." Reconciliation is a process not an event. There is an intellectual working through as well as an emotional working through.

Just remember, most friends and family members want to be supportive, want to be of help. Many don't know what to do or say. It is very helpful if you can ask for what you want or need. It may be someone to share your tears or silence. You may want to talk a lot and have your friend share memories too. If someone has said they want to help and you are comfortable with that person, please let them know how they can ease some of the loneliness.

Some of the books which I have found personally helpful in working with grief issues are:

1. Good Grief by: Grander Westberg
2. I Can't Stop Crying by: Rev. John Martin Frank Ferris MD
3. The Helpers, Journey by: Dale Larsen
4. Bereavement by: David Crenshaw
5. Several-Books on grief by Dr. Wolfelt

For Children-

1. How it feels when a parent dies by: Jill Kremetz
2. The divorce workbook Sally Blakeslee Ives David Fassier, M. D.Michele Lash M.Ed.. A. R.T

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