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DELAWARE HOSPICE

Since 1982

Your Loss, Your Grief

What Can I Do? Where Do I Start?

LOOK AT YOUR GRIEF. IT IS YOUR GRIEF.

“I have started to heal by giving myself permission to grieve.”

- Your grief is uniquely your grief.
- It is all right for you to grieve.
- Your grief is necessary.
- There is no “right way” to grieve.
- It is OK to cry: tears are healing.
- Take time to grieve—expect your grief to consume your energy for a longer time than you ever imagined it could.

How long will I feel like this?

- There is no timetable for grief.
- Look at your grief—grief is our caring response to loss. It is the price we pay for love.
- No one else can experience your burden or grief.
- No one else can work through your grief for you.
- Do not try to avoid your grief.
- Grief is so hard. So painful. So personal. So bottled-up. So misunderstood.
- Your loss and grief will always be part of you. Part of your memory.

LOOK AT YOUR LOSS. DISCOVER THE EXTENT.

“I had no idea that I could be so deeply wounded. Or in so many ways.”

- The pain of loss can be staggering:
Mental—concentration nearly gone.
Physical—little energy or strength.
Social—no partner; no interest.
- Expect an overlapping of your feelings.
- It is normal to slip back. Do not expect to progress steadily through phases of grief.
- There will be double-feelings as the underlying distancing from the one you've lost continues throughout your grief.
- You may experience great highs, or great lows, at any time, without warning.
- Look at your loss—try to express your feelings.
- Talk about regrets. Admit any feelings of guilt.

Even after some time has passed, you may feel filled with a burden of guilt not there at first.

- Accepting and admitting are healing:
It seems to lessen the pain.
It is cleansing.
- The intense pain of your loss will fade in time.
- There will be happy days—there will be sad days.

Some days you may feel like the last dry leaf hanging on a branch. But days will come when you remember carefree times.

- Try to recall memories of joy together.
- Joys remembered are joys again.

LOOK WITHIN YOURSELF. WHAT IS LEFT?

“I did not die.
I am still here.”

- Try to discover what isn't lost:
 1. Remember you are a survivor you are here—you are alive.
 2. Care for yourself—be gentle with yourself. Take time to cry—take time to rest—take time to enjoy.
 3. Forgive yourself—be patient with yourself.
 4. Others do care—real friends are there for you. Let people be near you—you will gain strength from them.
 5. Hang on to humor—yes, you can still laugh sometimes.
- Look within yourself—yes, it is necessary.
- Who are you apart from the one you lost?
- Be honest with yourself and take care of yourself.
- Be yourself—try to trust yourself.
- Face your fear of death. Death has come close to you—you now know how final it is.
- What you actually choose to do when you do not know what to do, reflects your true self.
- Now is a time to think about yourself.

LOOK AT WHAT IS POSSIBLE NOW.

“I’m not sure I can start all over again”

- FACE YOUR LONELINESS—this is an empty time. Try to change some of your empty time to creative time. Solitude can be a positive in which to accomplish some thing you may want to do. Try one productive task each day.
- ACCEPT YOUR LONELINESS—No friend can share aloneness; you are solely one and alone. There is no running away; there is no place but where you are. Momentary panic is an initial, temporary response. Your next discovery can be an awareness of inner strength enabling you to survive.
- THE BOTTOM LINE—It is necessary to look within yourself to find enough raw honesty and courage to be true to who you are now.
- Part of your life has ended. Part of you has died. You did not want this part of your life to end, but you had NO CHOICE.
- WHAT IS POSSIBLE NOW?
- What things are possible NOW that were NOT possible before your loss?
- STOP. THINK. WHAT?
- WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE NOW?
- Try to find meaning and purpose in what you are already doing.
- Strive to take control of your life once

again. It is your life. Strip away any clutter. You have within you the resources to heal. In time, you will do what you need to do. You will heal naturally.

- Hopefully, it will be comforting to know your responses are normal. Everyone searches for ways to cope and move beyond their loss.
- Hang on to hope. Hope is healing.

LOOK AT YOUR LIFE. BEGIN REORGANIZING IT.

“How can I start to climb back into life?”

- You have changed—you have grown.
- Life is a process of change—life is change.
- Your life has been irrevocably changed.
- It takes great courage and inner strength to want to begin again.
- It is all right that you are not sure you want to begin again.
- Time seems to change the feelings—you will know when you want to begin again.
- Time does dull the sharp edge of grief.
- Gradually, you will come to accept your changed life. It is the only life you have.
- Face your fear of the future.
- Look around you—others are there to help you.

People make the difference—reach out to people—be a friend—give some comfort—make someone laugh!

- You may now have more time, or you may have less time. Either way, your creative energy is no longer centered on one person.
- You are now free to share this energy more fully with others, to strengthen friendships and to form new relationships.
- You have grown—pain forces you to grow.
- It is OK to be OK.
- You can re-organize your life.

LOOK AT NEW BEGINNINGS—A NEW YOU.

“What can I really do?
How can I start?”

- Taking a walk is one of the simplest and healthiest things you can do. This simple exercise strengthens you physically, mentally, and emotionally.
- Ask someone to join you for your walk when you are ready to share your time.
- Jot down your thoughts and feelings. Perhaps you already have. Your thoughts are very personally yours. You will want to re-read them for comfort. Gradually, you will become aware you are changing. Growing.

Is there something that you have always wanted to do? To try? If so, this may well be the right time. Practice saying, “I want”

- Try is a key word in dealing with grief.
- Begin by making small plans. Have small hopes. Bigger hopes, plans and decision will follow.
- Try to view your life in a new way.
- Do what you know to do.

“I feel alone because I know that
I am not loved, except in a general
kind of way. I am no longer
‘special’ to anyone.”

- You have lost someone you loved, but more important someone who loved you.
- Your need to love and to be loved is still within you. Let your loved ones and those close to you show their love and caring.
- Do not shut them out. They are grieving too, but in a different way.
- You may want to join a support group.
It is simply that: support.
- Sharing your expressions of grief with others who are grieving allows you to talk about it.
- Allowing others in can eliminate the isolation that intensifies grief.

YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE HAS BEEN EXPANDED.

Give sorrow words; the grief that does not
speak whispers the o'er-fraught heart,
and bids it break. —SHAKESPEARE

- It is still true: unexpressed grief leads to prolonged depression.
- You need someone to talk to. To listen.
- Let your family and friends know that it is all right to talk about it.
- Let them know you want to remember.
- Let them know you hope they remember, and you hope they will share their memories with you. The sharing brings fresh hope.
- When sorrow is shared, the burden seems to divide, each listener taking a part of the load, as much as each can bear at the time.
- Know that within Delaware Hospice you can receive continuing care and support.
- You can talk about it with this caring team.

“Death is the final experience of every life.”

Death may be the most important part of life. Beyond death is unknown, but what we understand the least may well be the best.

- You have experienced the ultimate loss, the loss of your loved one.
- Try to realize that loss also brings gain.

Your understanding of yourself and of life has been expanded.

- You now may know that part of being mortal is to be dependent. Dependent on the spiritual resources within you, and dependent on one another.

The four common needs when we are grieving are:

- Relief from expectations (our own and those of others).
- Recognition of our feelings.
- Reviewing and remembering.
- Reintegration (putting ourselves back together).

For grief and bereavement support when you need it, please contact a bereavement counselor at the Delaware Hospice office nearest you. You'll find contact details for each of Delaware Hospice's offices on the back cover of this guide.

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DELAWARE HOSPICE

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