

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT GRIEF

“I know they mean well but sometimes I wish people would realize what they are saying only makes me feel worse!” Sheila grabbed a tissue before continuing, “My brother told me when the funeral was over, I needed to just get on with my life and stop mourning! How can I do that? I need to feel, and cry, and remember!”

Robin patted Sheila’s hand. “I know what you mean, it’s only been six months and my sister insists that I need to move on and get rid of Bill’s clothes. I can’t. Not yet. And who is she to think she knows what this feels like?”

“Crying makes it worse, that’s what my mom used to say,” piped in John. “But I feel better when I cry. I know it’s been a year, but when a song comes on, or I smell her perfume the tears come. A year. Will I always feel this way?”

“At least you can cry. “Suck it up” is what my dad said. And now? I just hold it all inside...except here.” Jerry looked around the group. “With you guys I can be myself. You understand. And so does the guy that wrote this book. He held up a copy of Understanding Your Grief by Alan Wolfelt as everyone nodded in agreement.

Margaret took the lead. “Everything you are mentioning Wolfelt identifies as **A Dozen Misconceptions about Grief**. Let’s look at a few of them tonight.

1. Grief and mourning are the same thing. They are not the same. Grief is what we feel inside. Mourning is externalizing it, feeling the feelings. The more you feel, the more you heal. It just takes time, and we must be intentional and work through it. Many people are uncomfortable with mourning. They mean well. But they will want you to hide it or move through it too quickly. The only way you will heal is if you embrace your grief and care for it with an open heart.

2. Grief and mourning progress in orderly predictable stages. Totally untrue. There are no “stages.” When Dr. Kubler-Ross wrote her book On Death and Dying it was reflective of people who were terminally ill, not for grieving people. Everyone mourns in different ways, and the best thing you can do is accept where you are at, stay in touch with your emotions, and express them. There is no predictable order. You can’t compare your grief journey to another’s.

3. You should move away from grief, not toward it. Our culture encourages us to not show our grief, and it sounds like this is what you are experiencing this week.”

Sheila interrupted, “Seems like whenever anyone asks me how I’m doing, I’m supposed to say I’m fine and just deny that I’m mourning, because they’re uncomfortable. So, I do put on my happy face so I can fit in with the rest. Maybe I need to take off the mask and just be me. My brother will have to deal with it.”

“Absolutely Sheila! John, it seems #4 is for you today,” continued Margaret.

4. Tears of grief are a sign of weakness. Crying releases internal tension, even chemicals that will soothe you. And it lets people know that you need comfort. Your tears show you are willing to deal with the pain of your grief. Tears bring healing.

I like the quote Wolfelt included by Washington Irving. “John, would you read it aloud?”

“There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and unspeakable love.”

John finished, then added “I like that, because my tears are about unspeakable love. Nobody will ever know how much I loved Mary. I carry that love so deep within me that I don’t even have words for it.”

Ted put his arm around John and paused before looking at their leader. “Margaret, it’s this next one, number 5, that I needed to hear. I’ve got a strong faith, but there’s people who are telling me that I mustn’t mourn because Alice is in a better place, and that my crying just shows I’m being weak.”

Margaret sighed. “Even the Bible says, ‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.’ I know that has given me hope as I still mourn the loss of my husband.”

5. Being upset and openly mourning means you are being “weak” in your faith. To quote Wolfelt, “Above all, grief is a spiritual journey of the heart and soul.” He encourages us to be honest, even mad at God if we need to for a season, or to take a break from religious services until ready. But to always tend to your spirit. “Don’t let people take your grief away from you in the name of faith, but do take care of your spirit.”

“This is really helping me. I never lost anyone before, and I didn’t know it would hurt this badly. I’m really thankful for what we’re learning and talking about together. I don’t feel so crazy and alone now. I really needed this.” Sheila looked around the room, as the group silently agreed.

(While this grief group is fictional, our Grief Group at Locke at Tower Park uses Wolfelt’s book Understanding Your Grief-Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart. It has given everyone hope, healing, and understanding. We highly recommend getting a copy for yourself or a friend! And of course, the door is open Thursday nights at 5:00pm. We may deal with our grief but there’s a lot of happy memories and laughter!)

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Healing From Grief with Mother Nature

“Remember to take your Vitamin N!”

Mother Nature is always there with open arms to help and heal you, her hands full of what could be called “Vitamin N.” The Nature Vitamin comes in every shade of blue, green, red, orange, yellow, violet, and indigo. Colors and energies will soothe your grieving heart and restore your soul.

This summer, take the time to get outside, or go for a drive. Sit beside water. Bury your toes in the sand. Lift your face to the sun. Listen to the birds. Smell the freshly mowed grass. Let Mother Nature embrace you and offer you the healing you seek.

Greening your Grief – Nature’s Benefits

Whether a walk in the woods or sitting by a garden, time with Mother Nature will revitalize your mind, relieve stress, offer serenity, increase creativity, encourage adventure, and ease your grief. A retreat into nature nurtures your body, mind, and spirit. Mayo Clinic encourages patients to carve out “Green Time” to lead a healthier life. Studies have shown that proximity to nature improves mood, enhances respiratory functioning, helps regulate hormones and strengthens emotional resilience.

Remembering Good Times

The sights, sounds, smells, and sensations of nature will also allow you to remember, and it may be bittersweet. Allow yourself to chuckle and cry, sometimes at the same time. Focusing on the good memories of being with your loved one will let you mourn in a fresh way. Do you have fond memories of family gatherings, roasting marshmallows, taking a walk, digging in the dirt, splashing in the water, or taking a long drive to look at fall leaves? Are there ways you can revisit your favorites?

Soaking in Hope and Beauty

“Where flowers bloom, so does hope,” encourages Lady Bird Johnson. Nature’s beauty reminds us of all that is good in life, even when tears blur our vision. The sun rises. The sun sets. Spring always follows Winter. There is hope that seasons come and go, even this season of grief. There is hope in the beauty of the earth, the playful nature of our pets, the compassion of human touch.

Bring Nature Inside

Fresh flowers, plants, and pets can bring the power of nature indoors. So can the Internet. Search YouTube for “Fly Over Hawaii” (or Norway, or more places than you can imagine!). It’s like taking a free vacation to any place in the world.

What can you do to make sure you or others who are grieving enjoy nature this summer?

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Take Time for *The Talk of a Lifetime*

How well do you know the people who matter most to you? Chances are you know many things about them simply because there are memories you share and from hearing stories about them. However, that’s often just the surface.

Sitting down with loved ones to talk about their lives can be a rich and satisfying experience. Learning about memorable events, people, places, values and lessons they have learned can help bring you closer to the people you care about. It’s called having *The Talk of a Lifetime!*

We at Locke Funeral Services offer free decks of cards with *The Talk of A Lifetime* conversation starters. You can have a talk with anyone—a parent, grandparents, spouse, child, aunt, uncles, or close friend. It’s a fun easy way to learn meaningful stories. Here’s a small sample:

- Tell me about a time you got into trouble as a child.
- What is the scariest thing that ever happened to you?
- What is something very few people know about you?
- Tell me about your childhood best friend? College? Your current best friend?
- What made you laugh so hard you cried?
- For what are you most grateful?
- What events in our nation’s history had an impact on you and how?

When would be a good time for you to try these out on your loved one? Dinner? Phone call?

NEW SUICIDE SUPPORT GROUP

VickiJolene Lindley Reece — Continuous Care Coordinator

“If only I would have...” “I should have...” “Why didn’t I know?” “How could he do such a thing, we loved him so!” These are tearful cries of parents, siblings, family, friends, and co-workers that we have heard over the years, and especially very recently.

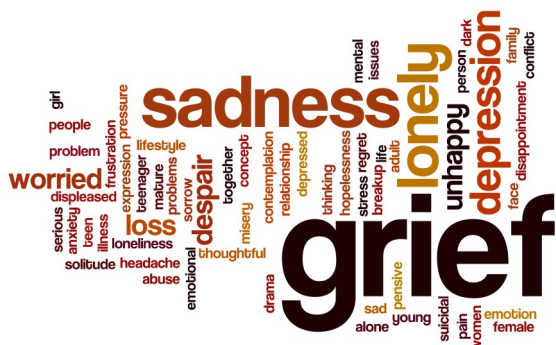
Suicide is on the rise. The stresses of Covid, economy, dysfunction, loss of jobs, break-ups, mental illness, and bullying are compounding and seems to have drained many of hope. Hopelessness is the root cause, with suicide seeming to be the only solution for some. A permanent answer for a temporary situation. There is usually no note, and always no clues once a person has made a real plan to end their life. You may have known their struggles, but so much is masked, and you will not be allowed to interfere (help).

Suicide leaves loved ones on a rollercoaster of emotions. Guilt, shame, fear, anger, shock, depression, and blame. We spend hours, months, even years of “magical thinking” that we could have done something to rescue them. If only we could go back in time!

At Locke Funeral Services we know suicide is increasing, leaving a trail of tears, broken hearts, and millions of questions. While we have cared for many in our Thursday Grief Groups, we decided to create a safe, understanding community for those specifically grieving suicidal loss.

Have you lost a child, a parent, a sibling, a friend, a co-worker? It’s a long journey to heal your heart, a very long journey. **Please don’t go it alone. I’d like to introduce you to Amanda Anderson who will be leading a bi-weekly Suicide Support Group on Wednesdays at Locke at Tower Park. We believe she will companion you on the journey well.**

(p.s. You are always welcome in our Thursday groups if Wednesday doesn’t work for you!)



SURVIVORS’ GUILT



Amanda Anderson — Suicide Grief Group Facilitator

I know you probably see this heading and go “what is survivors’ guilt?” Well, I am going to share my experience with you. When you lose a loved one to suicide there are a million and one things going through your head. There are a lot of “Whys” and “What could I have done?” These are all normal questions to ask. Sadly, there are no answers for those and that is when survivors’ guilt sets in.

When I lost my husband, I dealt with that, and it was actually a delayed survivors’ guilt because I was so numb. Once it hit. it felt like a hurricane of emotions and guilt and anger at myself. I took my role as a wife seriously and thought I had done an ok job. Being married to someone who struggled with mental illness is like fighting an invisible battle. Trying to encourage him to get help was a daily fight, but still felt like I was doing my best.

When he committed suicide, I felt like I had not only failed as a wife but as a mom as well. I also had people in my life that were making me feel like that as well (which was not helpful at all!). You may be feeling that way too, and that is okay. I struggled with feeling like a failure, and I hate to fail at anything. It caused some major depression and anxiety, and thoughts like “was I gonna fail again?” and “who would want a wife like me if I couldn’t keep my husband alive?”

This caused me to be isolated and distant. I poured myself into work and being a mom because I was not about to fail in that. The guilt got so bad and the pain unbearable that I too wanted to take my own life. I remember it well. I was lying in my bed crying and screaming out to the ceiling and wanted the pain to end. I knew I had pills in my medicine cabinet. I grabbed the bottle and then something stopped me and made me walk into my son’s room. I remember dropping to my knees by my son’s bed while he slept and heard a voice in my heart say, “YOU DID NOT FAIL AS A WIFE! YOU DID ALL YOU COULD! YOU DID A GREAT JOB! YOU ARE GOING TO BE OK!” I got up and flushed the pills down the drain and got help.

If any of this sounds familiar to you, please know you are not alone! Here at Locke Funeral Services we want to help you navigate through that. Know this... **YOU DID NOT FAIL YOUR LOVED ONE! YOU ARE AMAZING! YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU COULD FOR THEM! YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS JOURNEY!**

Deep In My Heart
by Helen Steiner Rice

Happy little memories
go flitting through my mind,
And in all my thoughts and memories
I always seem to find
The picture of your face, dear,
the memory of your touch.
And all the other little things
I've come to love so much.
You cannot go beyond my thoughts
or leave my love behind
Because I keep you in my heart
and forever on my mind...
And though I may not tell you,
I think you know it's true
That I find daily happiness
in the very thought of you.

Inspirational Quotes – Healing Through Nature

- Nature in her green tranquil woods heals and soothes all afflictions. – John Muir
- I find so much inspiration and healing from Mother Earth. Through my connection with Nature my soul is nurtured. – Jodi Sky Rogers
- There is something infinitely healing in the repeated forces of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter. – Rachel Carson
- Colors are the smiles of nature. – Leigh Hunt
- Nature is the kind of friend that never leaves my side. Even in grief-stricken times, in her soul I can confide. – Angie Weiland-Crosby
- Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better. – Albert Einstein
- I believe in God, only I spell it nature. – Frank Lloyd Wright
- The best thing one can do when it's raining is to let it rain. – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Finding Faith in a Flower
by Helen Steiner Rice

Sometimes when faith is running low
And I cannot fathom why things are so,
I walk among the flowers that grow
And learn the answers to all I would know...
For among my flowers I have come to see
Life's miracle and its mystery,
And standing in silence and reverie,
My faith comes flooding back to me.



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Want to be on our mailing list? Give us a call, to join our quarterly newsletter list.

JOIN US every week!

2024 Continuous Care Support



Grief Support Daytime Meetings
 TIME: 1:00—2:30 p.m.
 LOCATION: Cabin Coffee, 2040 Kimball, Waterloo

Grief Support Evening Meetings
 TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.
 LOCATION: Locke at Tower Park, 4140 Kimball, Waterloo

Thursday Dates:
 July 11, 18, 25
 August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
 September 5, 12, 19, 26

Suicide Grief Support Meetings
 TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.
 LOCATION: Locke at Tower Park, 4140 Kimball, Waterloo

Biweekly Wednesday Dates:
 July 3, 17
 August 7, 21
 September 4, 18

Please feel free to bring a friend. All groups are free & open to the public!
 Call with questions 319-233-6138.
WEATHER ALERT: If schools are closed due to weather, the meeting is canceled.