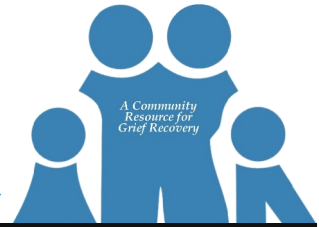




THE CARE COURIER



January-March 2025, Vol 11 Issue 1

Where is My Loved One Now?

We may have faith. We may believe the day will come when we are reunited with those we love. But it's wonderful when we hear evidence of life beyond earth. A sign. In our Grief Group we hear of these. Sometimes it's a feeling, or an item appears. While we may wish that would happen to us, we can grasp onto the experiences of others.

Rex, retired military and police officer grieved terribly after years of caring for his wife Patricia who battled congestive heart failure and Parkinsons. The devastation destroyed all hope to have any kind of happy life here on earth. But now he believes Patricia, from heaven, wants him to go on, to know she is okay, and that she is watching over him. The grief is still there, it will soften over time, but he will miss her the rest of his life. **The following is completely true. We offer it to you to encourage you to know there is hope while you are grieving. Rex shared this:**

“Our family gathered in late August 28, 2023; it had been one year since Patricia died. That year was the worst in my life. At times I wished I could die just to be with her again. I didn't know how I was going to ever get through the pain in my heart. I handed out helium filled mylar balloons to friends and family. I chose a big heart, and wrote on the bottom, “I love you Patricia and signed it with my initials.

When we released them, I watched mine separate from the pack. It took off like a bandit. It went straight up, just over the trees and within thirty seconds in was out of sight going dead east. I didn't realize it then, but it flew in the direction where my sister lives.

I got a call from my sister about 3 weeks later. “Rex, there's a pink heart balloon by our back door.”

“And I said there is?”

Yep. It's got your initials, “R.E.” I can't read all the rest. Rex, I think it's Patricia. I think it's the same balloon you released in Iowa.”

“You got to be kidding me!” I said dumbfounded.

“No, I'm not kidding, I'm sending you a picture and the bar code so you can check it out,” she responded.

Rex looked around the room. All were wide-eyed at this seeming miracle. “So, I went to the store where I bought the balloons. Checked the bar code. Same. Same bar code, same balloon!

“That balloon traveled 1000 miles. It started off with about a six-foot string. And when I got there only three inches were left. My guess was it got tied in trees up in the mountains. Think about it, that balloon crossed four mountain ranges to get from Waterloo Iowa to my sister's home in North Carolina.



Magic happens every day in a zillion little ways.

~unknown

Continued on pg 2

Unbelievable that it landed right by her back door! Patricia really loved North Carolina! We have a cabin there and stayed there for months at a time. She loved it, her favorite place on earth.

“It sent shivers up my spine. So, I jumped in my truck and drove there. I had to, right?”

“When I got there, my sister showed me the balloon. It was still inflated, but not like it was. I looked at the note I’d attached a month earlier. It was the same balloon.

“We took it over to our house and put it in the closet because I was going to bring it home. When I got ready to come home, I couldn't find it. It was not in that closet! I’m talking about a pretty good-sized walk-in closet. My sister came over and searched through every inch, and then my neighbors. It just disappeared. I don't know where it went. I went through the whole house it wasn’t anywhere.

“I still can’t believe that balloon went that far. This whole experience let me know she’s watching and that she’s still there. Patricia’s always been a light in my life. Now I’m’ just trying to figure out my life so I can carry on without her.



Picturing Your Loved One Safe Allows Your Brain to Heal

Stanford University neuroscientist Andrew Huberman notes that **grief is not only about sadness, but even more about desire**. A study showed that the same part of the brain is triggered when one desires something they can’t obtain and when one is craving the return of their loved one. It will take time for the brain to heal (longer than it takes a bone to heal) and when the brain can picture a loved one in a specific place it helps the brain to stop firing the “desire” neurons. Yes, there is still grief, but it is less intense in that area.



Funerals and Rituals Help

Funerals help tremendously when it comes to helping the entire brain both logically and subconsciously. People who see the body, attend a funeral, and participate in rituals experience a closure, and a sense of knowing where their loved one “is.” Many find comfort going to the grave, placing items there, and talking to their loved one. This truly can help heal grief.

When my husband died, we chose cremation, after his body was prepared for a viewing at the visitation and service. We believed his soul was in heaven but knew it would help family and friends to actually see him and cry at the casket.

Ancient funerary rites and rituals in all cultures were created to both honor the life of their loved ones, and to allow pure mourning to take place. The Irish/Scottish Wake allowed people to “keen” by wailing, singing, and involved the entire community.

Honestly, funerals may seem pricey, but pricey compared to what? Ultimately, funerals are **priceless** as you care for your loved one even in death and see him or her before you say goodbye.

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NEED COMPANIONSHIP & HELP ON YOUR JOURNEY?

Our grief groups follow a companioning model rather than a counseling model. *Companion* from Latin means *with bread*. True listening, understanding, and support. **Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones** by Dr. Alan Wolfelt helps us navigate the true issues of grief in a most insightful and gracious way.

NEW NORMAL IS POSSIBLE!

UNDERSTANDING YOUR GRIEF: TEN ESSENTIAL TOUCHSTONES by Dr. Alan Wolfelt begins.

This book has helped thousands heal their grief and get to “New Normal.”

Overview: Thursday, January 9, 2025 Take a peek at the book and schedule. See if it’s for you. It will be worth exploring. And there’s coffee.

Begins: Thursday, January 16, 2025

Every Thursday

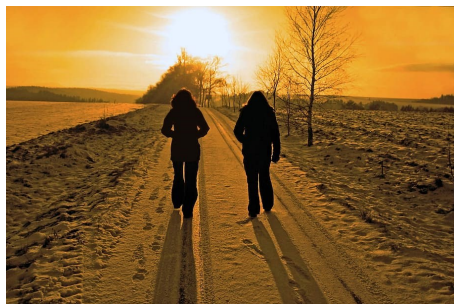
Cabin Coffee 1:00-2:30pm

2040 Kimball Avenue, Waterloo

Locke at Tower Park 5:00-6:30 pm

4140 Kimball Avenue, Waterloo

You will receive insights, understanding, and a healed heart. You will be surrounded by kindred spirits who will laugh and cry with you. You will never be judged. This will continue into Spring and the time will go quickly. You will be welcome to stay on in the weeks that follow.



“Life is a journey, not a destination.”
by Ralph Waldo Emerson



LET IT SNOW, ENJOY A STAY-CATION

When I look out over the frozen gardens, I think of daffodil bulbs that are “stuck” for now and will soon gloriously emerge. You might feel stuck waiting out this season of your life. What if you temporarily set your grief aside? When grieving you must “dose” your pain with a “spoonful of sugar.” Honey-ed escapism can be healthy during dark days and nights.

Escape to the Warm and Wonderful

Set your GPS for the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden! It’s like a short trip to the tropics. Check the website for special events. The Flora is scheduled to open December 2024 with a farm to table menu. Elevator available. Handicap accessible.

Be A Couch Traveler

Enjoy Travel shows. Search “Fly Over” on YouTube for exquisite views of Italy, Switzerland, Korea, Greece, Germany, Hawaii. Your grocery is full of cultural foods. Explore international grocers or Trader Joes for delights beyond our borders! Go to Stams for gelato, chocolates and licorice! Try Bosnian markets for decadent deserts.

Return to Younger Happier Times

Whether it’s RFD, AMC, or YouTube, find your favorites. Lucy, Andy, Rifleman, Uncle Milty, or Cheers.

Silly is Sensational

Search on YouTube for 1950-60-70’s commercials. Put on your jammies, make some cocoa, toast or cereal and laugh at Bugs Bunny, Flintstones, and wonder when Wile E Coyote will ever learn?

LIGHT COMBATS THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Years ago, we had to close a church. The entire congregation and I shared a grief that was excruciating and overwhelming. I shared my agony with a colleague who suggested I read Thomas Moore's book, Dark Nights of the Soul. He confessed that he battled his own "demons." While the book did help me, he later committed suicide. He was a positive, faithful pastor. He was extremely effective and skilled, but futility overshadowed him. It didn't make sense. Don't let dark days overcome you!

This winter season may compound your personal grief, making the dark night darker. We are reeling from election results and the reactions that followed. We are witnessing the threat of war and violence. We are experiencing economic changes. And now the days are shorter, darker and it's freezing outside! We wish we could return to the days of light and laughter.

Once you choose Hope, anything is possible.
--Christopher Reeve

As I write, know that there is hope. There is light. We will come through our own troubles and turmoil. As so will our nation and the world. I truly believe Spring will bring relief for all of us. In the meantime, we need to understand this darkness and not let it overcome us.

When we lose a loved one, the grief is complicated. There are not stages. You journey down a path that heads you toward healing. It twists and turns, as the texture morphs from stoney to smooth. There are delays and detours, but if you keep the destination of a healed heart in sight while truly mourning you will get through the darkness. And yes, there are beams of light even in the darkness.

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Every human life is made up of light and dark, the happy and sad, the vital and deadening. How you think about this rhythm of moods makes all the difference. Thomas Moore

GoodReads summarizes Moore's book, Dark Nights of the Soul: A Guide to Finding Your Way Through Life's Ordeals: "Our lives are filled with emotional tunnels: the loss of a loved one or end of a relationship, aging and illness, career disappointments or just an ongoing sense of dissatisfaction with life.

"Society tends to view these "dark nights" in clinical terms as obstacles to be overcome as quickly as possible. But Moore shows how honoring these periods of fragility as periods of incubation and positive opportunities to delve into the soul's deepest needs can provide healing and a new understanding of life's meaning.

"Dark Nights of the Soul presents these metaphoric dark nights not as the enemy, but as times of transition, occasions to restore yourself, and transforming rites of passage, revealing an uplifting and inspiring new outlook on such topics as:

- *The healing power of melancholy*
- *Finding solace during illness and in aging*
- *Anxiety, anger, and temporary Insanities*
- *Linking creativity, spirituality, and emotional struggles*
- *Finding meaning and beauty in the darkness"*

THE JOURNEY TO NEW NORMAL

The workbook Grief Work, Healing from Loss by Fran Zamore and Ester R.A. Leutenberg gives us a very clear understanding of the **tasks** that will lead to healing, and the **symptoms** you will experience along the way. Healing comes when you intentionally stay aware and express the raw feelings. It will take time. There is no reward for speed.

THE SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

“The journey from Loss to New Normal is a long winding and complicated one. There are markers along the way to help you better understand the characteristics of the phases of the grieving process. These symptoms are NOT checklists. These are some of the symptoms that some people feel some of the time. Every person’s experience of grief is different, and each has different feelings and reactions. Remember the Healing Pathway is not a one-way or one-land path. There is potential for a great deal of movement among the phases as we move towards a New Normal which is constantly changing.”

SHOCK

The Reality of The Loss Has Not Sunk In

- ◆ Disbelief,
- ◆ Euphoria
- ◆ Numbness
- ◆ Searching
- ◆ Suicidal Thoughts*

***A suicidal thought is a wish to be with your loved one. It is just a thought. If you begin to create a plan, TELL SOMEONE, call 988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline, or 911.**

DISORGANIZATION

The Reality of the Loss Is Real

- ◆ Aimlessness
- ◆ Anguish
- ◆ Avoidance
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Forgetfulness
- ◆ Hopelessness
- ◆ Loneliness
- ◆ Loss of interest
- ◆ Physical distress
- ◆ Relief
- ◆ Sadness
- ◆ Loss of appetite
- ◆ Loss of meaning
- ◆ Anger
- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ Confusion
- ◆ Fear
- ◆ Guilt
- ◆ Isolation
- ◆ Loss of faith
- ◆ Nightmares
- ◆ Preoccupation
- ◆ Restlessness
- ◆ Sleeplessness
- ◆ Yearning
- ◆ Suicidal thoughts*

REORGANIZATION

Re-building A Satisfying Life—YOUR NEW NORMAL

- ◆ Changed values
- ◆ Control over remembering
- ◆ Emergence of balanced memories
- ◆ New choices
- ◆ New meaning in life
- ◆ New priorities
- ◆ Pleasure in remembering
- ◆ Return to previous levels of functioning

SUICIDE GRIEF GROUP CONTINUES

Locke Tower Park, 5:00pm – 6:30pm

Wednesday: January 8, 22
February 5, 19
March 5, 19

Did your loved one take their life? It helps to share the pain and specific issues you are facing with kindred spirits. We care!



Continuous Care
1519 West Fourth Street
Waterloo, IA 50702

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

JOIN US every week!

2025 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:

January 9, 16, 23, 30
 February 6, 13, 20, 27
 March 6, 13, 20, 27

Suicide Grief Support Meetings

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

Biweekly Wednesday Dates:

January 8, 22
 February 5, 19
 March 5, 19

*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.

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