



Pathways

Exploring Hopeful Paths
of Healing

catholic  community hospice

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Resources

Ongoing Support Groups:

Support groups which are ongoing are generally groups that meet once or twice a month, year round, on a continual basis. The advantage of such groups is that they provide a place to begin sharing your grief with others who have suffered loss and provide the opportunity to build long term supportive relationships. The following groups are open to all and are free of charge.

<i>Church of the Ascension</i>	913-681-3348
<i>Cure of Ars</i>	913-649-1337
<i>Holy Cross</i>	913-226-8745
<i>Prince of Peace</i>	913-782-8864
<i>St. Patrick's</i>	913-299-3370
<i>St. Marks, MO</i>	816-373-2600

Its not Over Until Its Over

Over the last year we have journeyed together along the pathways of grief. In the process we hope you have discovered some tips and suggestions that were beneficial for you and we hope you have begun to heal. Whatever the case, we want you to know that while our service is officially ending, and while this is the last newsletter you will receive, we are always happy to help in any way we can.. If therefore you need additional help and resources please contact us anytime. We would be happy to help in any way we can.

**For Bereavement Support or
Questions Contact:
Brent Doster at 913-433-2058**

A Year is a Relative Thing

It has been a year since the loss of your loved one and you have literally been through it all. The emotional ups and downs, the birthdays, holidays and anniversaries, the challenge of facing new situations without your loved one. All contribute to the full weight of your loss. As a result you have learned many things and have found many ways to cope. Your grief has, in the process, significantly changed and hopefully diminished. You may even have more good days than bad and feel that you are well on your way to reconciliation. Yet in reality a year is a relative thing and your grief has no particular shelf life. It ebbs and flows as is necessary, it continues and transforms as needed. It comes and goes. This is both normal and necessary. Grieving takes time. Furthermore, your grief and loss are not something to “get over” so much as they are a new reality to which you must adjust. As you continue to find meaning and new life, allow yourself the grace to continue grieving. In this way your grief is as natural as your love: infinitely connected to who you are now.

Reflecting on Spiritual Recovery

In the face of loss, we can lose parts of the assumptive world and the foundation of our faith can be questioned. Yet reflecting on our spiritual values and beliefs helps us recognize our spiritual recovery as we reconcile the loss into our life. Consider the following questions as a way to understand and evaluate your own experience of grief. You may want to journal about each one: **In what is my faith renewed? Where do I identify my hopes in life? What have I found to be sacred? What now gives my life meaning and purpose? For what am I grateful? Have I forgiven? What have I come to accept? What has come up new for me out of the experience of loss and grief?**



How Rituals Help Us Grieve

One of the challenges of grief is most certainly the willingness and the reality of moving forward with life while maintaining our connection to the deceased. We long to remember, but without so

much pain. We want to progress, but without dishonoring. In the midst of this tension we are often torn in between. Finding ways to live with this tension is thus an essential component of healing.

One way of remembering and honoring the deceased is through the powerful practice of ritual. Rituals are those repeated symbolic actions and events that help us to honor and remember those whom we love. They are personal ways we find to maintain a connection with those we have lost. They may be as simple as visiting the cemetery or as specific and detailed as creating a scholarship or fund in a manner which reflects something particular about their life and legacy. Whatever we decide to do, the point is to honor and remember our loved one in some continual ways which carry his or her life forward with us in patterned expressions. For in creating such rituals we allow our loved ones to live on in the concrete reality of our lives by making a sacred space for specific times, days, actions and events just for them. And in doing so we find a proper place for them to be a part of our lives as they are now. Consider then how you both ritualize and will continue to ritualize the loved one you have lost. Doing so will give the comfort of knowing that moving forward does not mean forgetting.



Complicated Grief

While grief is a burden for anyone to bear, some grief is more complicated than others. For some grief is like a severe thunderstorm which carries with it some intense moments of frightful darkness, torrents of tears, thunderous emotions and even moments of light(ening). In this case the damage done in the process is less severe. There are holes in the roof and perhaps even a flood, but the basic structure of one's life may be left intact. For others grief is like a tornado which not only brings the torrents of rain and hail but the destruction of almost everything they have ever known. Everything gets all mixed up, the familiar seems lost and no shelter remains. All that may be left in such cases is the foundation and the tasks of rebuilding one's life is thus daunting. This is complicated grief to say the least.

If you are one for whom the intensity of your grief has not changed much over the past year, if you are one who has been unable to resume your life with any sense of purpose or meaning, if you are one who continues to feel isolated and alone, one whose grief has swept over you with all the devastation of a tornado, then I encourage you to reach out today. Consider seeking help and support through a local parish or a counselor in your community. Because complicated grief is a load that no one should bear alone, and there are many who would love to share in the tasks of grief.