



Pathways

Exploring Hopeful Paths
of Healing

catholic  community hospice

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(913) 621-5090

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. Mark's, MO</i>	816-373-2600

Making Progress

Sometimes your grief may feel endlessly static. It may seem like there is no progress. Yet if you think about your journey through grief and actually plot its course, you might notice the subtle changes taking place. Do you sleep better or eat better? Are you learning new skills or taking on new roles? Do you sometimes plan for the future? Have you been able to enjoy some of the things you used to enjoy? Are your emotions more manageable now? Consider these questions and take note of your progress. Adaptation brings healing.

For more information on local support
groups or bereavement support services
please contact
Brent Doster 913-433-2058

As a grief specialist who consistently helps others to deal with their loss, one of the most common problems I run into is the idea of “moving on.” That is to say that oftentimes griever feel the need within them, or feel pressure from without, to “move on with life” or “get over it.” According to this expectation, grieving well means leaving behind. It means recovering to some pre-state of events as if nothing ever happened. But the object of grieving well and healing *is not* so much to “move on,” forget or leave behind, rather it is to learn ways of coping with loss that does not hinder the progression of life. In other words, the point of grieving well is to learn to cope in such a way that forward progress can be made. It means moving forward *with* your loved one yet without as much of the pain grief so often brings. So if you feel the need or pressure to “move on” consider reframing your expectations to “moving forward,” being fully engaged and alive. Because that is what grieving well is all about.



Recurring Grief

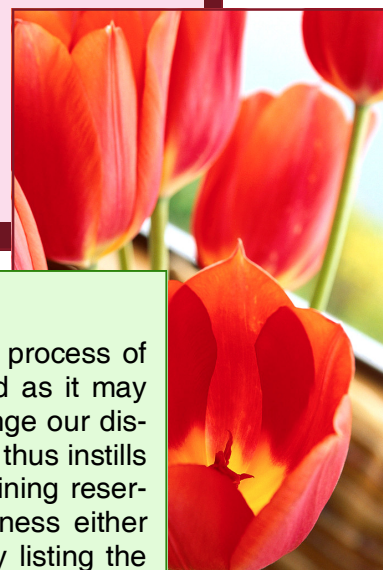
Because your grief runs deep within you, because it is a part of you now, even as time passes and you begin to heal you may still experience intense moments of grief. Such moments might come as a burst of sudden and unexpected emotion triggered by some thought, smell or event. Other moments or periods might come as one approaches significant times of the year such as holidays, birthdays or wedding anniversaries. For some, approaching the anniversary of their loved one’s death brings back many of the initial thoughts and emotions they experienced at that time. It is not uncommon at these significant times to rehash events from the past and, in some sense, to feel the pain all over again. Whatever the case is for you, know that this is normal. Such moments will come and go just as everything else has. During these times cull from your past experiences of getting through the rough terrain of your grief. Take heart and know this is all part of the progress through your grief rather than a regression. You *are* healing. You *will* thrive.

An Enduring Connection

One of the great challenges of grief is staying connected. While we long to move forward and progress in our grief we also long to linger so as not to forget. We want to remain connected to our loved one even as we progress. We long to remember, but without so much pain. We want to honor, yet without total absorption in our loss.

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 ways which we find to acknowledge the uniqueness of the personality, life choices, and path the deceased walked in life. Through rituals we find a connection with those we have lost, giving them a special and significant place in our continued life. In doing so we provide a sacred place for our loved ones to dwell within our hearts. Rituals are thus a very important aspect of grieving.

There are many different types of rituals, and finding those which are significant to you is most beneficial. A ritual may be as specific as maintaining an old habit of our loved one’s through speech or action such as attending a yearly sporting event or singing a favorite song. A ritual may also be as general as visiting the cemetery or having a Mass said in their honor. Whatever the case is for you, finding and enacting appropriate rituals in honor and memory of your loved one may help you to grieve and grow. Consider then how you might recognize and witness your loved one’s life through rituals. Doing so will give the comfort of knowing that moving forward does not necessitate forgetting, but remembering better.



Thankfulness

Being thankful is perhaps one of the most potent spiritual practices in the process of grieving. In being thankful we become mindful that not all of life is as bad as it may sometimes seem despite our grief. In essence, when we refocus and change our disposition to one of gratitude, we find goodness and love all around. Gratitude thus instills us with a balancing hope to both look for and seek out the positive, sustaining reservoirs of life in the midst of loss. Consider making a practice of thankfulness either through prayer, meditation or even journaling. Begin and end each day by listing the things you are thankful for as a way to count your blessings and stir the hope within.

“Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape . . . [but] not every bend does. Sometimes the surprise is the opposite one; you are presented with exactly the same sort of country you thought you had left behind miles ago. That is when you wonder whether the valley isn’t a circular trench. But it isn’t.”

~C.S. Lewis, reflecting on his own grief in *A Grief Observed*