



# Nursing Newsletter

## Bereavement and Grief

The loss of a loved one is life's most stressful event and can cause a major emotional crisis. After the death of someone you love, you experience *bereavement*, which literally means "to be deprived by death."

It is not easy to cope after a loved one dies. You will mourn and grieve. Mourning is the natural process you go through to accept a major loss. Mourning may include religious traditions honoring the dead or gathering with friends and family to share your loss. Mourning is personal and may last months or years.

Grieving is the outward expression of your loss. Your grief is likely to be expressed physically, emotionally, and psychologically. For instance, crying is a physical expression, while depression is a psychological expression. It is very important to allow yourself to express these feelings. Often, death is a subject that is avoided, ignored or denied. At first it may seem helpful to separate yourself from the pain, but you cannot avoid grieving forever. Someday those feelings will need to be resolved or they may cause physical or emotional illness.

Many people report physical symptoms that accompany grief. Stomach pain, loss of appetite, intestinal upsets, sleep disturbances and loss of energy are all common symptoms of acute grief. Of all life's stresses, mourning can seriously test your natural defense systems. Existing illnesses may worsen or new conditions may develop.

Profound emotional reactions may occur. These reactions include anxiety attacks, chronic fatigue, depression and thoughts of suicide. An obsession with the deceased is also a common reaction to death.

## Living with Grief

Coping with death is vital to your mental health. It is only natural to experience grief when a loved one dies. The best thing you can do is allow yourself to grieve. There are many ways to cope effectively with your pain.

**Seek out caring people.** Find relatives and friends who can understand your feelings of loss. Join support groups with others who are experiencing similar losses.

**Express your feelings.** Tell others how you are feeling; it will help you to work through the grieving process.

**Take care of your health.** Maintain regular contact with your family physician and be sure to eat well and get plenty of rest. Be aware of the danger of developing a dependence on medication or alcohol to deal with your grief.

**Accept that life is for the living.** It takes effort to begin to live again in the present and not dwell on the past.

**Postpone major life changes.** Try to hold off on making any major changes, such as moving, remarrying, changing jobs or having another child. You should give yourself time to adjust to your loss.

**Be patient.** It can take months or even years to absorb a major loss and accept your changed life.

**Seek outside help when necessary.** If your grief seems like it is too much to bear, seek professional assistance to help work through your grief. It's a sign of strength, not weakness, to seek help.

“What we have once enjoyed deeply we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.” - **Helen Keller**

## What do I say? What should I say?

While many of us worry about what to say to a grieving person, it's actually more important to *listen*. Oftentimes, well-meaning people avoid talking about the death or change the subject when the deceased person is mentioned. Or, knowing there's nothing they can say to make it better, they try to avoid the grieving person altogether.

But the bereaved need to feel that their loss is acknowledged, it's not too terrible to talk about, and their loved one won't be forgotten. One day they may want to cry on your shoulder, on another day they may want to vent, or sit in silence, or share memories. By being present and listening compassionately, you can take your cues from the grieving person. Simply being there and listening to them can be a huge source of comfort and healing.

While you should never try to force someone to open up, it's important to let your grieving friend or loved one know that you're there to listen if they want to talk about their loss. Talk candidly about the person who died and don't steer away from the subject if the deceased's name comes up. And when it seems appropriate, ask sensitive questions—without being nosy—that invite the grieving person to openly express their feelings. By simply asking, "Do you feel like talking?" you're letting your loved one know that you're available to listen.

Even very young children feel the pain of bereavement, but they learn how to express their grief by watching the adults around them. After a loss—particularly of a sibling or parent—children need support, stability, and honesty. They may also need extra reassurance that they will be cared for and kept safe. As an adult, you can support children through the grieving process by demonstrating that it's okay to be sad and helping them make sense of the loss.

## January Happenings

National Glaucoma Awareness Month

January 6-12 Folic Acid Awareness Week

January 19 - World Religion Day

January 20 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 25 – Chinese New Year

January 30 – World Leprosy Day

## Is there Anything I should Avoid saying?

**"It's part of God's plan."** This phrase can make people angry and they often respond with, "What plan? Nobody told me about any plan."

**"Look at what you have to be thankful for."** They know they have things to be thankful for, but right now they are not important.

**"He's in a better place now."** The bereaved may or may not believe this. Keep your beliefs to yourself unless asked.

**"This is behind you now; it's time to get on with your life."** Sometimes the bereaved are resistant to getting on with because they feel this means "forgetting" their loved one. Besides, moving on is much easier said than done. Grief has a mind of its own and works at its own pace.

**Statements that begin with "You should" or "You will."** These statements are too directive. Instead you could begin your comments with: "Have you thought about..." or "You might try..."

Florida Crisis and Suicide Hotlines

Florida Teen Hotline- 954-567-TEEN (8336)  
Phone Friend for Kids up to Age 13- 954-390-0486

## Free Community Events

Jan.11 - Live Well, Be Well. 10.00am. 5950 Glades Rd. Boca Raton

Jan. 18 – Florida Health and Wellness Fair. 11:00am – 4:00pm. 1350 East Sunrise Blvd. 33304

Jan. 29 - Bulletproof: Free Therapy for Those Affected by Gun Violence. 5:30-8:30pm. 2650 Sistrunk Blvd. 33311