



GRIEF SUPPORT AND CONNECTIONS FOR YOUR JOURNEY

Every human being experiences loss at some point in life, yet some losses impact us more than others. While loss and the accompanying grief are part of our human journey, they can be disruptive and create an overwhelming sense of sadness, loneliness and fear. The reminders below can assist you through the grieving process.



The five steps towards healing

intense over time, but for a long while they may seem to just appear.

STEP 3

The shortest way to the other side of grief is through it. A person who tries to suppress their sadness about a loss will eventually have to deal with the anger, sadness and unfairness of the loss. You can delay your grief, but you cannot avoid it. The more unresolved and suppressed grief is, the more a person's

STEP 1

Remember there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Some people outwardly express grief, while others are private. Some people want a lot of support and comfort while others need to grieve alone. Grief takes as long as it takes. There are no time limits on how long one "should" grieve. Each person's sadness and re-orientation to life after loss is different. No one should tell someone else, "Get over it, you have been sad long enough."

life will be emotionally restricted, and their grief will come out in unconscious ways at those around them. It is important to honor and acknowledge grief and loss and the accompanying feelings so these feelings are not slipping out at unwanted times at others, or turned inward and causing physical distress.

STEP 2

Grief "comes in waves and hides in pockets." One moment a person may feel fine and happy, and the next moment they are overwhelmed by sadness and frustration at their loss. Unexpected waves of emotion may be confusing to those around a person who is grieving. They may start crying for no apparent reason. This is a normal part of the grieving process. The waves of sadness do get further apart and less

STEP 4

Spend time with long-time friends and relatives who care. Continuity in life is important. Being able to relive memories, reconnect with the past and have a sense that you are not all alone is important.

STEP 5

Take advantage of the support resources available through Coastal Hospice's Grief Support Program. We offer memorial celebrations, support groups, socials, and special opportunities. Please check the calendar on page 4 for more information. These events are also on our website at www.coastalhospice.org.

The Natural Order of Things – Navigating the Death of a Parent

By Howard Travers, Bereavement Care Manager

Sunday, May 9, 2021, is Mother's Day in the United States. It celebrates motherhood and it is a time to appreciate mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, stepmothers, foster mothers and mother figures. In the days and weeks before Mother's Day, many schools help their pupils to prepare a handmade card or small gift for their mothers. Father's Day is also just around the corner. Sunday, June 20, 2021, is celebrated worldwide to recognize the contribution that fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, stepfathers, foster fathers, father figures and even other male relatives make to the lives of their children. This day celebrates fatherhood and male parenting.

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HONOR THE LIFE OF YOUR LOVED ONE
Attend a Coastal Hospice Memorial Service

Our next gathering will be on:
Sunday, May 2, 2021, 3:00 p.m.
Long Wharf Park, Cambridge, MD

Free and open to the public. You're invited to either bring your own sea shell, or shells will be provided. Write your loved one's name on the shell and after a brief time of reflection, return the shell to the water.

For additional dates and location, please see the calendar on the back of this newsletter.
For more information call: 410-742-8732 Ext 621

Note: In accordance with COVID-19 guidelines, you're asked to wear a mask and bring your own chair. Physical distancing of 6-feet will also be observed.

The process of mourning and grieving is hard for everyone, but there are elements of the loss of a loved one that can feel especially difficult when you're an introvert.

As an introvert myself, when I was mourning the death of my parents, so many of the traditional parts of the mourning process felt very invasive to me. For instance, people coming over to my house after the funeral. I had just been taking care of ailing parents and planning a funeral and now I have to have people over? I know that everyone meant well, but having people in my home, some of them I barely knew, felt very unsettling. And then came the inevitable questions, are you going to sell the house, are you going to move and what are you going to do now?

Being an introvert used to mean being labeled as shy, but today's definitions have thankfully broadened. Introversion now includes other characteristics like how introverts recharge while being alone or with just a couple of close friends, preferring a less sensory environment and being more deliberate in decision making.

The mourning process, however, can include lots of people visiting your home, strange environments like a hospital or funeral home, lack of privacy, social gatherings and lots of decisions just as a start. Not a great environment for any introvert even under the best of circumstances.

When you already feel terrible about losing a loved one, being thrust into a high-sensory, intense social situation can seem almost impossible to navigate.

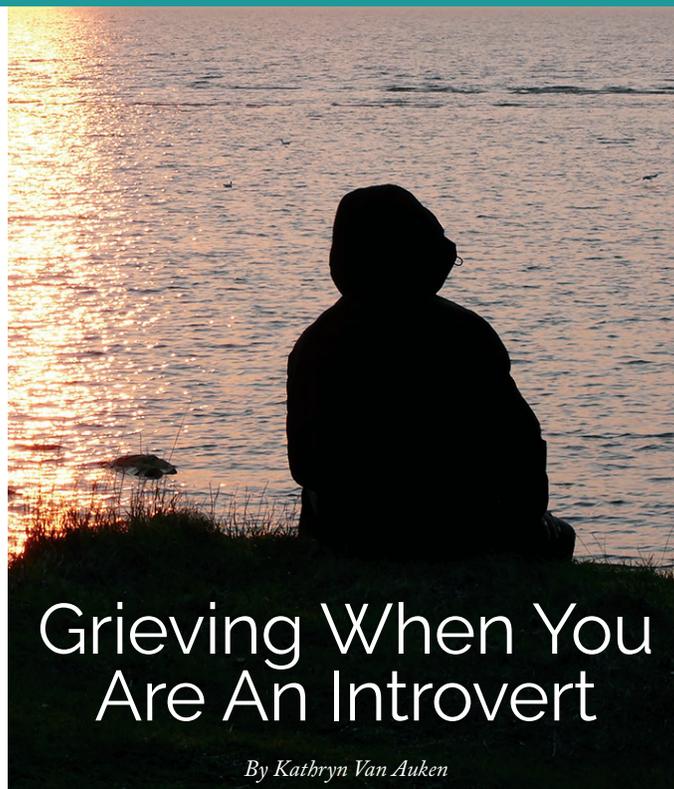
I offer these tips to my fellow introverted grievers as you navigate the grief process while still honoring your feelings.

Accept that you are an introvert

Thanks to Susan Cain's book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, there is so much more information out in the world about what it means to truly be an introvert and more acceptance for introverts. There is nothing wrong with you; it is just how you prefer to live in the world. Pushing yourself and forcing yourself to do things will only make you feel worse.

Know your limits

While many of the activities surrounding the loss of a loved one may seem mandatory, don't forget you get to decide the best way for you to honor your loved one and your grief. When your days seem oversaturated with obligations and people, carve out time and space for yourself. Volunteer to run errands so you can get out of a crowded house and take a quiet drive, take the time to write something to be included in the program instead of



Grieving When You Are An Introvert

By Kathryn Van Auken

speaking at the service and use social media or CaringBridge to keep friends and family updated instead of contacting everyone individually. By honoring your introversion, you will be able to heal yourself and honor your loved one in a way that feels true to you.

Self-care and self-compassion are vital

Even if you weren't an introvert, you would likely feel drained by the mourning process. Your emotions are on a rollercoaster and there is just so much that has to be done; you are physically and mentally worn out. When your opportunities to recharge are limited, your emotions will feel so much more fragile. It is more important than ever to take care of yourself by

eating well, sleeping and fitting in some exercise and quiet time for yourself.

It is also important to be compassionate towards yourself. Losing a loved one is a terrible thing to go through, and you need to cut yourself some slack if you aren't doing everything "perfectly." Not knowing the answers to all of the questions that will be asked is okay. You will make the right decision for you when you are ready and you shouldn't feel pressured into making any quick moves.

Find a support group

Joining a group may seem like the exactly wrong thing to tell an introvert, but as introverts, we appreciate people that are talking about real things, not small talk. That is what a grief support group can provide. Of course, you will want some time and space on your own to express your feelings, but you will also need to learn that you are not alone in your suffering. There are others out there that understand what you're going through. Grief groups offer a "me, too" dimension that can be hard to find in your current social circle. Being with a small group of fellow grievers can be very healing. It may take a few attempts to find the right group for you, but you can find some nourishing relationships there.

Grief is going to visit us all, and we all process it differently, regardless of our personality traits. At the beginning of the grief process when the loss is new, it may seem that extroverts have an easier time since they can thrive in social environments and take action when quick decisions need to be made, but once the traditional mourning activities start to fade, that is when the environment is more conducive to introverts. The crowds and the questions dissipate and you'll have the space and time to be more circumspect. It's important for extroverts and introverts to support and accept each other through the whole process because it is hard for everyone. We are all doing the best we can.

Navigating Death of Parent

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Having recently suffered the death of my own mother under the care of Coastal Hospice, November 15, 2020, I know how difficult the first year of grief is, especially holidays and birthdays. If, like me, you too recently suffered the death of either your mother or father or both parents, Mother's Day and/or Father's Day may invoke many grief-related feelings for you too.

After all, the death of a parent is the single most common form of bereavement in the United States. Yet, it is the most thoroughly neglected and overlooked of all losses. Many people say that a parent's death is one of the hardest things they have ever dealt with in their life. Even when the parent had been ill beforehand, the ensuing grief can include a variety of emotions: sadness over the loss; relief at the ending of the parent's suffering; anxiety because a kind of "protection against death" symbolized by a parent is gone; and memories, painful as well as comforting. After all, the death of a parent typically represents the loss of a long-term relationship characterized by nurturing and unconditional support. Parents are often described as "always being there when the chips are down, no matter what."

While our parents are alive, they often represent a source of moral support. There is often a sense that, if real trouble comes, we can call on one or both of our parents. The death of the last surviving parent often leads to a consequent role change. You no longer have a parent to fall back on. That sense of security is gone. There is no longer anyone who might be willing to answer your call for help unconditionally. The death of a last surviving parent can also represent the loss of heritage. Adjusting to the death of one or both parents can involve both holding on and letting go, as we simultaneously recognize the reality of death and treasure comforting memories of him or her.

Perhaps because of a mother's traditional role as the primary nurturing caregiver, many people believe that the death of a mother is harder to cope with than the death of a father. Another factor may be the fact that, statistically, fathers tend to die before mothers. Thus, a mother's death often represents the loss of having parents.

When a relationship has been dysfunctional, a parent's death ends the hope of creating a better, more functional parent-child bond. The death of a parent can also strain a marriage, especially if you feel that your partner is not offering as much emotional support as needed or expected or does not understand the impact of your loss.

What people say to you after your parent's death is one sign of this widely held neglect. "He lived a full life," they say, as if that fullness somehow fills your own emptiness. Or else they ask, "How's your mother taking it?" but ask nothing about

how you feel. Later, if your grief lasts longer than friends or relatives find comfortable, they point out, "Of course it's sad, but don't parents typically die before their children? Isn't that just the natural cycle?" These various condolences are well intentioned. It's not as if people purposefully neglect your grief. Rather, they just don't consider it to be significant. The unstated message is that when a parent is middle-aged or elderly, the death is somehow less of a loss than other losses. The message is that grief for a dead parent isn't entirely appropriate.

When a parent dies, yes, it is the natural order of things. But taking time to grieve for him or her or them should be as well.

Consciously or not, you hear these messages. Willingly or not, you pay attention to them. You may even end up believing them. The result is that you probably neglect your own grief. If you are a midlife adult, your mother or father's death is an important symbolic event. It may initiate a period of upheaval and transition. Most people report that the death of a parent changes their outlook on life, often spurring them on to examine their lives more closely, to begin changing what they don't like, and to appreciate more fully their ongoing relationships.

Any death reminds us of our own mortality, but your mother or father's death may cause you to realize, perhaps for the first time, that you have become an adult. Thus, the death of one or both of your parents can result in a "developmental push," which may lead to a more mature stance in which you no longer think of yourself as a child.

Here are a few suggestions for coping with the death of a parent:

1. Don't expect to be ready for the natural order of things; you won't be.
2. Never let anyone belittle your loss, make you feel guilty for grieving deeply, or hurry you through your grief. You are entitled to feel all of grief's intricacies and all of grief's intensity.
3. Grieving for a parent, like all grief, can be exhausting emotionally, physically and spiritually. Be kind to yourself.
4. This work of grief takes time; the process must not be hurried. And it is never entirely over.
5. Even as an adult, don't be surprised by feelings of abandonment and uncertainty that you experience.
6. After they are gone your parents will continue to be a part of your life, just in a different sense. You will always be their son or daughter.
7. Grief does not end. Rather grief comes and goes. And then it comes again.
8. If you feel the need, seek out support from others who've been there, a friend who cares, or a professional who can help guide you through the work of grief.



Coastal Hospice Inc.
 PO Box 1733
 Salisbury, MD 21802
 410-742-8732
 www.CoastalHospice.org

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TO OPT OUT: You are likely receiving this publication following the death of a family member, friend or loved one who received care from Coastal Hospice. Grief support is a vital part of the hospice philosophy of care. This publication serves to share information you can use during this time and highlight upcoming events. If you do not wish to continue receiving this publication or have a change of address, please contact Melissa Dasher at 410-742-8732, ext. 621 or mdasher@coastalhospice.org.

Find Community at Grief Support Programs

These groups provide a time of respite and a safe place to express feelings in the grieving process. We offer these activities at no cost to any adult who has experienced the death of a loved one, even if they were not a patient of Coastal Hospice.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions please call or e-mail for dates, times, locations and/or Zoom codes. One-on-one phone support or in person meeting available by request.

Dorchester County

One-on-one Support

During COVID-19, in lieu of group meetings, please call or e-mail Nicole for one-on-one visit.

Info: Nicole Long 443-614-6142
NLong@coastalhospice.org

Memorial Gathering

Sunday, May 2 at 3:00 pm
 Long Wharf Park, Cambridge, MD
 Info: Melissa Dasher 410-742-8732 Ext 621
MDasher@coastalhospice.org

Wicomico County

Support Group

Zoom Group Meeting - Fridays @ 1:00 pm
 Info: Nicole Long 443-614-6142
NLong@coastalhospice.org

Worcester County

Support Group

Zoom Group Meeting - Thursdays at 1:00 pm
 In person at Worcester County Library - TBA
 Info: Nicole Long 443-614-6142, NLong@coastalhospice.org

Memorial Gathering

Sunday, November 7 at 3:00 pm, Ocean City Pier, Ocean City, MD
 Info: Melissa Dasher 410-742-8732 Ext 621
MDasher@coastalhospice.org

Somerset County

One-on-one Support

- During COVID-19, in lieu of group meetings, please call or e-mail Nicole for one-on-one visit.
 Info: Nicole Long 443-614-6142, NLong@coastalhospice.org

Memorial Gathering

Sunday, June 6, 3:00 pm, Crisfield City Dock, Crisfield, MD
 Info: Melissa Dasher 410-742-8732 Ext 621
MDasher@coastalhospice.org