

# Thoughts about Grief:

## *Comfort for Those Experiencing Loss*

\* Grief is a painful feeling of loss experienced a bit differently by each individual. It is normal, natural, and unavoidable part of losing a loved one.

\*Grief, by definition, is a natural mental and emotional focus on that which was lost. Memories, feelings, images of the loved one seem to pop into one's mind continually, making it harder to think of other things. With the memories, come the sadness and pain, often at unexpected moments.

\*Grief demands expression in some form. By expressing your grief in crying, writing, talking, praying or whatever form feels comfortable to you, you are releasing the pain and making room for healing. It is a difficult and painful process. Our tendency is to avoid the pain and suppress it. But only by embracing the pain, will it ever go away. Crying is a wonderful way of making room for healing.

\* All of the thoughts, tears, memories that haunt a person in grief is a measure of how much they loved the person lost and is a wonderful honor to that beloved. Grief is a manifestation of love, and to be valued and honored for that, not denied and buried.

\* Grief is misunderstood and somewhat taboo in our culture. People in grief are commonly given unhelpful advice and unhelpful responses, so they need to try to screen whom to turn to and trust with their feelings.

### Please Remember:

**\*There is no "right" way to grieve!** One has to trust one's instincts. Everyone has a different healthy way to feel, respond, express sadness.

**\*There is no "time limit" to grief.** It often comes in waves, is unpredictable, and has its own time frame, which is individual. One can't hurry the healing of an emotional wound, just as we can't hurry the healing of a physical wound. So one must be patient with oneself.

\*Grief needs to be expressed in a safe way to be released in a healthy way.

\* Most people experience cognitive changes during grief: difficulty concentrating, losing objects, and inability to remember or stay focused. This is normal and your usual state of functioning will return in time. These are symptoms that you might want to spend some time focusing on your loss, because that's where your mind and heart are, even if you don't want to visit the pain. Try to make time for your grief during your day or week.

\* Most important: Be patient with yourself! Try to avoid being self-critical for this dysfunction, which is unavoidable and normal.

\* Most people need to talk to someone they trust about their feelings, and heal in more healthy ways when they do talk frequently about what they are experiencing to an understanding person: family members, clergy, counselors, close friends, support groups, social workers, mental health professionals. The more different people offering opportunities to express your

sadness, the better for you. Setting up this kind of support is the most important thing you can do for yourself during grieving period.

## Examples of ways people express grief:

- ♥ Most helpful- talking to people who understand and accept your feelings.
- ♥ Journaling, writing or drawing your feelings in any form, narrative, outlines, or poems.
- ♥ Saying a prayer.
- ♥ Lighting a candle.
- ♥ Having an object that reminds you of your loved one (key chain, jewelry, clothing) to wear or a symbol to keep somewhere to comfort you.
- ♥ Creative expressions of your feelings of loss or honoring the loved one: painting, drawing, computer or magazine collages, website designs, a piece of woodwork, painting a rock or sign, or any medium you have used in the past or are inclined to try as a self-expression.
- ♥ Memory books, photo albums, biographies of the loved one.
- ♥ Musical expressions of grief: creating, playing, or listening.
- ♥ Planting a garden or tree in honor of the loved one.
- ♥ Establishing a scholarship or other memorials.

Grief is appropriate pain because it represents your love. Try not to resist or fight it. Rather, relax into the sadness and give yourself time and space to just exist and to feel. Sometimes, that is as much as anyone can or needs to do.

God Bless you on this difficult journey.

Dr. Janice Bell Meisenhelder, Author of:

***Surviving the Unthinkable: The Loss of a Child***

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