Helping others Deal with Grief

You may find yourself in the near future either helping someone work through their grief, or needing to work through your own grief. To prepare us to help others with handling the death of a loved one let’s first look at what that person will experience. Then we will look at what we can do to help them.

When someone has to deal with the death of a loved one:

In assisting a person who has just been told of the death of someone close to them you should know that they will go through several waves of different feelings such as shock, disbelief and numbness. Their first response usually will be to want to block it out. You may hear they say several times, “I can’t believe this.” As reality begins to set in they will find themselves in a battle of knowing they need to deal with it, yet not wanting to deal with it.

They will begin to experience, (and may for some time continue to experience) many “abnormal” feelings that will be very normal for what they are experiencing.

Some of these feelings include:

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<th>Disbelief</th>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>Sorrow</th>
<th>Guilt</th>
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| Loneliness | Abandonment | Helplessness | Hopelessness |

These various feelings make dealing with grief to be one of our most painful experiences we ever face.

节水 One of the first messages a person needs to hear from us is that the feelings they are experiencing are appropriate.

Q. Why would a person have these types of feelings?

A. These various feelings are coming because there has been a drastic change in their life. It is a change that has permanent ramifications.

In providing assistance you will want to give a person some time to deal with the shock of the news they have heard. Slowly reality does settle in and they know they have to deal with this situation. Part of acknowledging that they truly have lost a loved one is that will begin to realize that DECISIONS have to be made.

**(This is For Your Information as most students will not have to make ALL these decisions)**

These decisions include:

1. Funeral arrangements, that include:

   - The selection of a funeral home
   - Which casket to purchase
   - Clothes for the loved one
   - Time and place for funeral
   - Time and place for visitation
   - Who will preside over the service? (Are they available at your selected time?)
   - What will the service consist of; special songs, special testimonies/stories/Scriptures
   - Where will the person be buried and who needs to be informed to make preparations?
   - Who will serve as pallbearers?
   - Flowers arrangements will have to be ordered
2. Who to call and when to meet with other Family and Friends

3. Dealing with changes in daily routine
(They may need to take from off work, may need to delegate work assignments, leave school, miss class assignments, make travel plans, as well as get home prepared for visitors, and get self prepared for meeting with people)
*For Liberty students who need to leave school they simply need to notify their Dean or have their RA do so and the Dean's Office will notify professors so that the student will have excused absences.

4. Informing key institutions (can be done later, but must be done.)

   Insurance         Lawyers         Government Offices like Social Security, IRS
   Banks              Other Financial institutions

Comforting those Who are Grieving  Rom. 12:15b

1. Learn what to expect when a person loses a loved one.

2. Realize every situation is different. You can not have a set formula for helping people who just found out that a loved one has died.

Things to do when they have just found out.

3. Take the initiative to go to be with them. GO! If you can't go, call them.
When you get there go up to them and speak to them.

Q. Why do we not want to go? What are we afraid of in these situations?

   A. Not sure they want to see anyone?
   My Response: Gauge the situation. If you arrive and it seems they want to be alone ask them, "Do you want to be alone?" They can tell you.

   A. Not sure what to say?
   My response: You did not go to them to give them answers. You went to give support. You give support with a loving look. You give support with a soft, caring word.
   Men, you give support with a firm handshake.
   You give support with a hug and/or a soft kiss on the cheek.
   *You support with your presence. You support with your silent prayers.
   Trust me: They will never forget who came to their aid in that horrible moment.

4. At the appropriate time, ask appropriate questions. (See yourself as a CARING reporter)
   Question you may want to ask:
   A. What happened? Simply ask, "what happened?" (After asking be ready to LISTEN!)
      For them to tell you helps them to move from disbelief to belief.
      While listening you need to stay shock proof. Don't overreact. Keep your emotions under control.
      You are here to help, to bring peace. Don't tell them you don't believe it. "I just can't believe this" is their statement, not yours.
B. If you don’t know much about them ask, “Were you very close to them?
   ❑ Principle to remember: the closer, the harder it is to accept.

C. When was the last time you saw them?

D. How old were they? If appropriate, how long had they been married?

E. Has any details of the funeral been decided upon? (As a leader who needs to
   get this information to other Liberty officials, you will want to write this info down.)

F. What do you need to do next?

G. (Ask this one only if you really mean it.) Is there anything I can do for you?
   They may need you to call someone. They may need you to take their place at work.
   They may need you to get their class assignments. They may need you to drive them home.
   They may just want you to go for a walk with them.

H. Having focused on them (and do that first and foremost) you may want to find out
   about how their family is doing. I like to ask who is going to take this news the
   hardest so I can intercede for that person.

5. Avoid Trite Sayings and Religious Cliches
   Don’t tell them that you know how they feel and start then telling them about your
   experience. This is their experience and attention needs to be focused on it, not away
   from it.
   Don’t tell them that time will heal all wounds.
   Unless you really know the situation don’t tell them that the person is better off.
   Unless the situation was very grave most people would rather have their loved one here.

6. There are some appropriate things to say:
   I am so sorry. My heart goes out to you.
   Tell them how they can get in touch with you if they need to.
   If close, tell them you love them.
   You are in my prayers.

7. Pray with them.
   It is best for the person who is the closest to the person with the highest title to initiate the
   prayer. Don’t ask do they want you to pray. Suggest that you pray.
   “I would like to pray for you and your family. Would that be all right?”
   And then you pray.
   When I pray I thank God for the person who has died and I asked for God to reveal Himself
   as the Good Shepherd to this family and give to them the comfort they need. I pray that the
   funeral will cause people to turn their eyes to the Lord.

8. Be real and genuine. Jesus cried with Mary.

   When Following up with them after the funeral:

9. Avoid the Temptation to try to rescue. Give them time to heal.
   Grieving takes time. Each person handles death differently. Some return to work immediately
   and some will need to take off two or three weeks to pull themselves together. As a friend and
   care person you cannot suffer for them or make them speed up the process or slow down the
   process. You can only make yourself available.
10. When visiting afterward, go to LISTEN.
   Let them talk about their memories, their pain, their regrets, & even their anger. Do not try
to give answers, explanations or solutions. During this period of time they are still in more need
of a shoulder than solutions. You should expect them to still be experiencing the emotion of
sadness. They are going through bereavement - bereavement means “to be robbed.” What we
have to watch for is the emotion of despair. This reveals itself by them saying they wish they
were dead.

   If they say something negative about God, leave it alone until another time.
   Be careful trying to answer unanswerable questions.

   If you have experienced the pain of losing a loved one you may share how God helped you
through it. Your story may help them to know they can get through this. But do your best
to stay focused on helping them.
   (Your story may bring up “Painful longing” and you may end up in need of comfort.)

11. Recognize the power of Prayer.

12. Send cards or notes with uplifting Scripture in it.

13. Check on the person over the next year.
   Principle: The closer, the longer to heal. The first thanksgiving is usually the hardest. If they
   are having a tough time getting back in the flow of things, look to find a support group for them.

14. Watch for teachable moments and affirm them as they tell you the
   lessons they are learning. Eccl. 7 says the funeral home is a school room.

IF YOU ARE THE ONE TELLING THEM THE NEWS

1. Stop your world completely. You will need to be totally focused. You should plan to spend some time
   with them once you tell them. If you cannot stop your world for a
   little while, delegate this to someone else. You cannot just tell them and leave them alone!

2. Do not tell other people before you tell them. You may be going to where you think they are
   and you find that they are not there. The last thing you want while you are looking for them is for someone
to say, "Hey I am so sorry your mom died" and they had not been told this.

3. When you locate them ask to talk to them privately. Find a quiet place that will have
   very little chance of interruption or intrusion.

4. Keeping # 2 in mind you may want to have one other person with you such as a close
   friend or another spiritual leader. Don't have a group. They will need privacy.

5. Prepare them for the bad news by simply saying, “I need to tell you something that is
   going to be difficult.”

6. Then tell them the news straight out. Ex.: “Your dad called and asked me to tell you
   that your grandfather, his dad, died this morning of a heart attack.”

7. Wait for them to understand the information and react.

8. Take appropriate actions of demonstrating love. After a few minutes pray with them.

9. Staying with them, have them call home to confirm what they have heard.

10. Ask if you can inform their friends and have their friends come in to support.

11. Knowing some of the information, asked what they will need to do next and how can
    you be a help to them.
**SOME INFORMATION TO HELP YOU COPE WITH THE GRIEF YOU ARE FEELING**

1. Part of doing the work of mourning is to allow yourself **time** to do so. **Take the time.**

2. At times you will need to be in the company of **others**; family, friends, a support group. Having someone to share your in-depth feeling with is very important in working through your grief.

3. At time you will want to be and need to be **alone.**

4. Attempting to maintain your routine is important because even with the change life, your life, is still going on. **Reestablishing** your routine is part of working through the mourning.

5. Working through grief is **hard** work. Your life has taken a new direction. You will find yourself stumbling through **doubt**, (I can’t do this), intense **sadness**, (I have never hurt this much) and maybe even feelings of **despair** (I don’t want to go on with life). Things that excite other people will have no effect on you.

6. You will experience feelings of **emptiness** and you will wonder how will I get over this. While you are in a period of calmness it is good to know that **time does heal** and grief **does lose its bitterness**. These statements mean very little to the ear and heart during the loss of your loved one, but you need to know they are true when death does invade your life.

7. You will battle feelings of **guilt** especially in the weeks following the death. You will make a vow to never forget them and day after day you will think of fond memories. Then a day will come and all of sudden you will think about them. In doing so you will feel guilty because you just realized you had not been remembering them. You realize, while you did not want to forget them, you have started.

8. Because you have lost a loved one means that from now on you will have this **pain**. **It becomes part of your life’s story.** When asked about this person, you have to answer that they are no longer alive on earth. It is a pain that slowly you learn to **live with**, but you never get over.

9. Feelings of **anger**, even rage, are very possible. The word “**Bereavement**” comes from an ancient word that means, “**to be robbed**”. You feel angry because you feel robbed. These feelings of anger may be directed at:
   - **Others** (Why didn’t the doctor know this?)
   - **God** (How could He let this happen?)
   - **Yourself** (Why didn’t I?)
   - The person who died. (Why didn’t they listen; I told them this was going to happen!)
   - In being angry with God, we should remember He is pretty secure. Being disrespectful with Him is not good, but being **open and honest** with God is ok. **Tell Him** how you feel. **Turn to Him**, but please don’t turn on Him or away from Him.

   ♦ We should recognize and acknowledge our anger. The feelings of anger are very normal after the loss of a loved one. It is something though that has to be worked through or bitterness will set in.
10. Another experience many face is **painful longing**. It reveals itself in the form of “**If only**” statements. It brings about a feeling of anguish and you may even start to cry for what appears to be no reason.

♦ An example: your mom died shortly after you were married. A year or two later you have your first child and you remember your mom thinking if only she were here to see her granddaughter.

At times painful longing will bring about a feeling of **guilt**. You may find yourself finally doing something that your loved one always wanted to do, but they never got around to it. You start wishing “if only” they were here again.

♦ Handle this pain by remembering a **positive** memory of your loved one and it will help with the healing process.

11. No one can tell you how **long** you will grieve or at what **pace** you will grieve.

Doctors have found that there are stages that a person moves through when grieving.

1. **Denial**
2. **Anger turned outward** - You feel robbed and someone is to blame
3. **Anger turned inward** - You feel guilty that you allowed yourself to be robbed
4. **Genuine Grief** - You realize that this is real and there is nothing that can be done to change it. You hurt and you cry and you mourn.
5. **Resolution** - There is acceptance that your life is now different.
6. **Epilogue** - You occasionally remember the loved one. It still hurts some, but it is a precious memory.

In moving to and through the stage of resolution where you make the decision that you are now going to move on with your life there are three things to know.

1. It is a decision that is very **painful** to reach.
2. It is a decision that no one else can **make** for you.
3. It is a decision in which no one else will know when you will be **ready** to make the decision.

12. Turn to **God** and rest in His caring arms. Let the promises of Scripture uphold you and rely on the Holy Spirit to be your comforter.

“**The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**”  Psalm 23

“**Let not you hearts be heavy, you believe in God believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am there you may be also.”** John 14:1-3
DEALING WITH PEOPLE AS YOU GRIEVE

Dealing with other people becomes part of grieving. At times people will be right in step with you and will say and do the right things. Then again you may find that people are out of step with your grief process and they will say the wrong thing and they will do the wrong thing. Most will do it unintentional. This is new for them also. While they may want to bring up the subject of your grief they may be afraid of opening a wound that is healing for you and cause unnecessary pain. You may feel dismayed because they brought the subject up or, on the other hand, dismayed because they never talk about it, as if they had forgotten. As they are hopefully trying to understand you and where you are at, try to understand them. Be open, polite and firm if they are making you uncomfortable. If you want to talk, you bring up the subject by asking, “Can I tell you what I am feeling right now?”

At times you will find people, (family or friends), who themselves are experiencing tremendous grief and will look to you for comfort. They may want to tell you about their favorite memory. You will have to decide if you are up to helping others. At times it will be very good for you and at times it will be too much to bear. You will have to decide if you can be of help to them.

In years to come you may find yourself being called upon to practice II Cor. 1:4. God will want you to comfort others as you have been comforted.

The Lord bless you as you go through this difficult time.