



Healing Journey

A NEWSLETTER TO HELP THE GRIEVING PROCESS

September

Bereavement Services

Providing grief counseling and education for patients, families and the community

Suggested Resources

Books

How To Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies

By Therese A. Rando, PhD

Widow To Widow
By R. Silverman

Widower: What Happens When Men Are Left Alone
by S. Campbell and P. Silverman

Father Loss - How Sons of All Ages Come to Terms with the Deaths of their Dads
by Neil Chethik

Motherless Daughters - The Legacy of Loss
by Hope Edelman

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The Loss of A Spouse

For most people, the loss of a spouse is a major loss in your life. This is because this individual may have played many roles for you. Depending on the number and type of



roles your spouse fulfilled for you, the loss of your spouse may bring many secondary losses as well.

One of the major roles your spouse may have had was one who affirmed your identity, someone who helped you define who you are. As a consequence your self-esteem and sense of self and security can be affected profoundly when your spouse dies. When you lose your spouse, you are bound to feel thrown off balance. There is insecurity because of the absence of a support that told you, whether positively or negatively, who and what you are.

Marriages are a social unit, and now one-half of that social unit is gone. You may have been used to operating as a couple, and now you have to function as an individual.

Unless you had time to anticipate and rehearse new roles because of the length of your spouse's illness, you may have new tasks to learn as you attempt

to get used to life without him or her. These could include home maintenance, finances, cooking, housekeeping, or child rearing.

If you were dependent on your spouse physically, emotionally and financially, being alone can have serious practical consequences and compromise your own health and safety.

One of the major problems in adjusting to widowhood stems from having to shoulder responsibilities alone. This can be taxing, especially as a single parent with young children. You will have to do the best you can under the circumstances, be realistic about what you can expect of yourself, and tap into other resources.

An important point to keep in mind is to avoid making major decisions for a while. For some widows who have financial or health concerns, it may be necessary to take some action in a shorter time frame. If you believe it's necessary, make sure you talk with several trusted people who are qualified to advise you in that particular area, such as selling your home or moving.

Challenges to the Widowed

These challenges can be stepping stones for your walk through grief. They need not be made in any particular order, but it might help if you pick ones that you can meet more easily before the more difficult ones.

1. Try to recognize death as another step in life's plan for the full development of a person and to accept the life-death-life cycle as common to all creation.
2. Strive, as a person coming to understand yourself, to learn about and understand the normal cycle of grief.
3. Allow yourself sufficient time to let the grieving take its natural course and insist that others allow you this time as well.
4. Try to come to a full discovery of yourself as an individual, as a complete person capable of looking to your own needs and desires, and of controlling and coming to grips with your emotions.
5. Work to overcome boredom and self-pity, to accept solitude while developing new interests and accepting the help of others as you come to recognize your own individual self-worth and self-esteem.
6. Do not live through your children, but continue to love them and care for them very much so that you all can draw strength from one another.
7. Learn to make your own decisions with confidence and faith, rather than looking for a replacement or substitute to make them for you.
8. Learn to accept people as they are and not as you would like them to be.
9. Forget about becoming your "old self" again – renewed religious faith and faith in yourself will make you an even better person capable both of loving and of living normally again.
10. Assist others, especially your children, in preparing for possible widowhood themselves by instructing them in the matter of wills and finances; in the importance of decision-sharing in marriage; of the dangers of over-dependence on one's spouse; and of the advantages of involvement in community and church.
11. Help to educate the "couples-oriented" society to an understanding of widowhood and the distinct contribution of widowed persons to church, government and community interests, and to the world's business, health care, and education.
12. As one who has come through the grief of widowhood, share your strength, faith, hope, and experience with others who are struggling with grief.

Upcoming Grief Programs

Sessions are free; donations are appreciated.

Adults Who Have Had a Child Die: For adults coping with the death of a child.

- Sundays, Oct. 16 – Nov. 20, 2 to 4 p.m., Phillips LifeCare & Counseling Center

Living With Grief: For adults coping with grief.

- Tuesdays, Nov. 1 – Dec. 6, 2 to 4 p.m., Phillips LifeCare & Counseling Center
- Tuesdays, Nov. 1 – Dec. 13 (no session Nov. 22), 6 to 8 p.m., Phillips LifeCare & Counseling Center

Loss & the Holidays: A one-session workshop for adults experiencing grief during the holidays.

- Tuesday, Nov. 8, 10 a.m. to noon, Saint Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Wednesday, Nov. 9, 3 to 5 p.m., Seaside United Methodist Church
- Thursday, Nov. 10, 6 to 8 p.m., Angel House Hospice Care Center
- Tuesday, Nov. 15, 10 a.m. to noon, Phillips LifeCare & Counseling Center
- Wednesday, Nov. 16, 6 to 8 p.m., Phillips LifeCare & Counseling Center

Loss & the Holidays for Teens: For teens experiencing grief during the holidays.

- Wednesday, Nov. 16, 6 to 8 p.m., Phillips LifeCare & Counseling Center – for high school teens

Program Locations

- Phillips LifeCare & Counseling Center: 1414 Physicians Drive, Wilmington
- St. Peter Evangelical Church: 4843 Southport-Supply Rd. SE, Choir Room, Southport
- Seaside United Methodist Church: 1300 Seaside Road SW, Room 207, Sunset Beach
- Angel House Hospice Care Center: 206 Warrior Trail Road, Whiteville

Information and Registration: Pre-registration is mandatory. For more information or to register, call 796.7991 for New Hanover County sessions; 754.5356 for Brunswick County sessions; and 642.9051 for Columbus County sessions. When leaving a message, please leave your name, phone number, and indicate the specific session you wish to attend.

Adult Loss of A Parent



The death of a parent is difficult. Although you may be an “adult child,” you are still the child of your parents, and this role will affect many of your issues in whatever grief you experience over their deaths.

Your response to the death of your parent is influenced by a number of factors. The importance of the loss will be determined by the meaning of the relationship and the roles your parent played in your life. Those of you who had unhealthy or negative roles will have a different grief response from those who basically had a positive relationship with a parent.

Another factor will be your age and the age of your parent. There is a major difference in losing your parent in your twenties than in your seventies. In your twenties or thirties, you may be consolidating your own sense of identity while building your family and/or career. You may be relying on your parents for support and advice.

The age and life circumstances of your parent also will affect your grief. If your parent was enjoying life and feeling healthy, no matter what the age, the death may seem untimely.

Another factor is whether this is your first or second parent to die. If it is your first parent, you usually have to be concerned about the impact it has on your surviving parent. You may have increased responsibilities for this parent and may have potential problems with siblings about the division of labor and responsibilities. When your second parent dies, you are put in a new category—you are now an orphan. You will have to contend with a new set of circumstances. There are no parents to be a child to and no parents to act out certain roles with and for you.

The death of your parent may surprise you with the reactions it stimulates. It can have profound implications because of the significance of the role a parent plays.

Ask the Counselor

by Susan L. Strickler, M.Ed.
Director of Bereavement Services

Q: *My friends call frequently to ask me to go out to dinner or to play bridge. I have no desire to do either and have refused. I just want to isolate myself, stare at my husband's picture, and cry. How do I continue to refuse their invitations politely?*

A: You are lucky your friends continue to call. Many do not after a number of refusals. This is a normal part of the grief process. I acknowledge your desire to be alone but suggest, however, that you experience the world around you ever so often. If an evening out for dinner or a bridge game is too long and exhausting, suggest they visit you for a walk around the block or for a cup of coffee. Small steps toward healing are important. Also, make a list of trusted friends with whom you can feel safe and can easily share your feelings and express your emotions. Don't hesitate to call these people.

Give A Gift That Keeps On Giving

Over the years, many generous and thoughtful individuals have helped to advance Lower Cape Fear Hospice & LifeCareCenter's tradition of excellent comfort and care through bequests and other legacy gifts. Some designate their gift to the Endowment Fund. When you make a gift to the Endowment Fund you are investing in the future of Lower Cape Fear Hospice & LifeCareCenter. Your gift is invested and then provides a perpetual annual source of income for essential hospice services and programs. The Foundation Trustees manage this permanent fund created in 1984. The Foundation distributes up to 5 percent each year to support agency programs that do not have a source of stable funding or reimbursement source, such as unreimbursed hospice care, palliative services, bereavement and grief counseling for all ages – all of which depend on your charitable contributions. Contact Laurie Taylor, Vice President of Development with Lower Cape Fear Hospice Foundation at 910.796.7944 if you wish more information on bequests or the Endowment Fund.



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GRIEF SUPPORT

Lower Cape Fear Hospice & LifeCareCenter Bereavement Department offers a variety of services for individuals who are grieving, including those listed below. Thank you for allowing us to participate in your grief journey.

Most of us have loved and lost special people in our life, and we understand that coping with grief is a challenging process.

If you are having difficulty dealing with the loss of a loved one, our Bereavement Services staff are the people you can call for help. They provide grief counseling to patients, their families, and the community through individual and group sessions.

Our bereavement counselors offer grief support in many ways. **Grief counseling** is offered to hospice families usually up to 13 months after a death. Short-term **individual counseling** is available for people in the community who have experienced a death, even if it is not a hospice-related death. Community organizations and businesses can arrange for **presentations** on grief topics. **Workplace programs** are available that describe how grief affects employees and ways to cope with grief after an unexpected death.

GRIEF SUPPORT FOR ADULTS

Throughout the year, support groups are offered to adults in our community, regardless of whether they received hospice services, as well as to families of our hospice patients:

- Living With Grief
- Living With Grief – For Men Only
- Adults Who Have Had a Parent Die
- Adults Who Have Had a Child Die
- Loss and the Holidays

SUNRISE KIDS

Children and teens grieve after the death of someone they love, and they often grieve differently than adults. Our Sunrise Kids program addresses the needs of children and adolescents who have experienced the death of someone in their lives. Bereavement counselors provide support to young people as they cope with emotions and changes that may be difficult, confusing, or frightening. Behaviors and feelings that occur in a typical grieving process are explained, along with ways they can be safely expressed. This is necessary before young people can begin to reinvest their energies into their own futures.

In-School Program: Our Sunrise Kids staff work with school counselors who make referrals and facilitate support group sessions within some schools across Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, and Pender counties. Children learn they are not alone by interacting with others facing similar experiences. They identify and express personal feelings related to their loss and develop coping skills.

Individual Counseling: An expressive arts therapist is available for individual counseling, where young people are encouraged to use their creative ability to get in touch with their feelings. Artwork is used to help capture memories, emotions and create a direction for the future. Within the school setting, a licensed clinical social worker is available for consultation with school counselors about the needs of individual students who have experienced a death.

Sunshine Camp: Creative, week-long summer day camps for children ages 7-12 encourage children to express feelings through play, art, recreation, and small group discussion. They benefit by sharing experiences with their peers.

The programs and services are free of charge (with the exception of a \$25 Sunshine Camp supply fee), and donations are appreciated.