

*"...the bereaved will find new strength, new vision, born of the very pain and loneliness, which seem, at first, impossible to master."*

*~Daphne Du Maurier*

# CARING CONNECTIONS

AUGUST 2018

## Asking for Help

**W**hen we are in the midst of grieving, offers such as “please call me and let me know how I can help” may seem overwhelming. Knowing how to respond can feel bewildering. Asking for help is not a natural skill for many people and asking for help when you are overwhelmed with emotions makes the task even more daunting. Yet, when we are grieving, asking for help is so important to keep our lives moving forward. When we feel like closing the blinds and covering ourselves with a blanket, it may be hard to mow the grass, take the car in for repair, find clean clothes, or go grocery shopping. This is when we need to go back to those kind people who have offered to help. Giving them some concrete ways they can help is rewarded two-fold. We get the help we need and our friend or family member may feel like they are doing something to help – even if it is a simple task like taking out the recycling.

A friend of mine was recently diagnosed with cancer. She is an inspiration for asking for help. She has limited income so she asked for gift cards to Cub. Additionally, her surgery for cancer is limiting her ability to do laundry and cook meals. So, she asked a cadre of friends to help with meals and laundry. She knows her friends well enough to know who she can ask to help for certain tasks.

The same holds true as we grieve. We learn who we can ask to help with specific tasks. If we need a shoulder to cry on and a warm, supportive listener, we may not ask the friend who we know is uncomfortable around intense emotions. Another friend may have health issues so they may not be the one to ask to mow the lawn.

Author, Toni Bernhard, offers these tips when asking for help:

1. Make a list of errands and tasks you would love to have help with.
2. Match your friends and family with tasks based on their interests, strengths and availability.
3. The best way to respond to “call me if you need anything,” is to call and ask them for help with a specific task such as picking up something from the grocery store or helping with a few hours of childcare.
4. If someone says no, try someone else.

You may be surprised what may come out of asking for help. You may strengthen your relationship with that person. By asking for help at a vulnerable time may be a sign to someone that you trust them and value them. So, go ahead – ask for help!

**Grace Anderson**, M. Div  
Bereavement Coordinator

# Tips for Helping Children Understand and Cope with Death

**H**onesty. Be honest about the death and use honest, straightforward language. Using terms such as "passed away," "went away," "went to sleep," etc. can cause misunderstanding, confusion, and even fear in a child. If the child has questions about cremation, burial or the funeral, answer them as simply and honestly as possible, with attention to their age and developmental stage. A good guideline is to only answer questions they ask and don't overload them with information! If you need to,

ask more questions of them to determine what they really want to know and what is their true concern.

Allow children in your life to see you express your grief. If they don't see you expressing your emotions, they may not feel comfortable opening up to you.

**Time and space.** Give time and space for grieving. It's also important to provide many different ways to express grief. Children, especially the very young,

may not have the right skills yet to express their grief through words. Give opportunities for non-verbal expression, such as music, dance, movement, art and play.

**Resources.** There are many organizations and camps in the state of Minnesota that specialize in helping grieving children of all ages. If you would like more information on these organizations, call and speak to our hospice bereavement coordinator.

## Complicated Grief

**H**ow do you know that you definitely need some professional grief support?

If it has been more than a few months and your symptoms seem the same or more severe than immediately following the loss, this could be a reason to consider professional help. A study on complicated grief at Columbia University identified the following symptoms:

- Strong feelings of yearning or longing for the person who died
- Feeling intensely lonely, even when other people are around

- Strong feelings of anger or bitterness related to the death
- Feeling like life is empty or meaningless without the person who died
- Thinking so much about the person who died that it interferes with doing things or with relationships with other people
- Strong feelings of disbelief about the death or finding it very difficult to accept the death
- Feeling shocked, stunned, dazed or emotionally numb
- Finding it hard to care about or to trust other people
- A feeling of constant fear and anxiety
- Feeling very emotionally or physically activated when confronted with reminders of the loss
- Avoiding people, places, or things that are reminders of the loss
- Strong urges to see, touch, hear, or smell things to feel close to the person who died

The study notes that three or more of these symptoms persisting beyond six months may be an indicator of complicated grief and a reason to consider professional support. There are certain factors that could put you at greater risk for having complicated grief. Having experienced one of these risk factors by no means is an indicator that you will experience complicated grief. It just means you are a little more likely. Some of these factors include things like experiencing an unexpected or violent loss, a loved one dying by suicide, a lack of support system, or past traumatic losses.

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*"Deep grief sometimes is almost like a specific location, a coordinate on a map of time. When you are standing in the forest of sorrow, you cannot imagine that you could ever find your way to a better place. But if someone can assure you that they themselves have stood in that same place, and now have moved on, sometimes this will bring hope."*

*~ Elizabeth Gilbert, Eat, Pray, Love*

## Notice Signs of Hope

**F**or those who are grieving, the simple thought of relinquishing the past with all it holds, and moving toward an unknown future can be frightening. But, while it is by no means necessary to forget the past, it is an important part of the healing process to accept that opportunities for meaningful living still exist. While the process of building a new self-identity and a "new normal" may be painful, it can be greatly aided by a sense of hope. Consider the words of Ronna Fay Jevne and James E. Miller (reprinted with permission from "Finding Hope: Ways to See Life in a Brighter Light," Willowgreen Publishing, 1999) as you move forward into the new season, seeking the hope to sustain you through your journey with grief:

"A wonderful thing about hope is that it's all over the place. You don't have to manufacture it—it's already present. Often you don't have to search for it—all you have to do is look in its direction. It's just as evident in the simple as in the grand, in the nearby as in the faraway. An easy place to notice hope is in nature. The color, the beauty, and the grandeur can be inspiring. Nature's enormous diversity offers this reminder: There are many possibilities. Look quietly and thoughtfully at individual creations—maple leaves and daffodils, sea shells and butterfly wings—and you can see nature suggesting, 'an Unseen Hand is at work.'"

Some signs of hope are dramatic—a glowing sunrise, a vivid rainbow, a bright piece of artwork, a hot air balloon making its way heavenward. Other signs of hope are quieter—the way bark heals on a tree, the way illness heals in a body, or the way hurt heals in a soul. Hope is on

display when people dream together and then work to make those dreams come true. It's seen when people embrace one another, and forgive one another, and help one another.

Hope is just a glance away when you look into the face of a newborn or a child, when you view the face of anyone who loves, and when you gaze into the eyes of an older person who is passionate about life. You can see sure signs of hope in those who willingly risk, those who unselfishly give, and those who courageously start over.

Today, just observe what's going on around you. Pay attention to any signs of hope you see. Wherever you are, they're there. Whatever is happening, you can catch a glimpse of them. The question is, will you?"



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[hennepinhealthcare.org/hospicegriefsupport](http://hennepinhealthcare.org/hospicegriefsupport)

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## Recommended Online Grief Resources

To access, you may type in the full link listed below or the name of the website into the search/address bar. If you would like individual or family support or need help accessing internet resources, please call Grace Anderson, Grief Counselor at 763-531-2424:

- **AARP**  
[aarp.org/home-family/caregiving](http://aarp.org/home-family/caregiving)  
Grief and loss
- **Brighter Days Grief Center**  
[brighterdaysgriefcenter.org](http://brighterdaysgriefcenter.org)  
Twin Cities-based grief center providing grief resources and services, caregiver resources and services, youth and family programs, and peer-based connections—all free of charge.
- **Center for Loss and Life Transition**  
[centerforloss.com](http://centerforloss.com)  
A resource for learning more about grief and loss
- **Gilda's Club Twin Cities**  
[gildasclubtwincities.org](http://gildasclubtwincities.org)  
Support to families and kids who have a loved one with or have lost a loved one to cancer
- **Grief Net**  
[griefnet.org](http://griefnet.org)  
Online grief support groups and resources
- **Open to Hope**  
[opentohope.com](http://opentohope.com)  
Articles and interviews about grief and loss
- **What's Your Grief**  
[whatsyourgrief.com](http://whatsyourgrief.com)  
Articles about grief

If you would like individual or family support at any time during your grief journey, don't hesitate to call our Grief Counselor, Grace Anderson at 763-531-2424.