

# Maximum Living Newsletter

“Dedicated To Our Families As They Take The Grief Journey”

JUNE, JULY, AUGUST 2008—SUMMER EDITION



**Summertime.** Soft breezes on a quiet evening. Ice cream cones. Fishing. Watering the flowers. Softball or horse shoes in the park across the street. The changes in our lives, following the death of a loved one, seem easier for a time. We find moments to value those things that will never go away. We share them with friends, relatives and neighbors who gather for a glass of lemonade and tell, or hear, a story or two.

## Taking Care of Me on My Journey Through Grief

by Shirley A. Brogan, LPC

Summer is a season to goof off. Take time out. Wear comfortable clothes, like shorts and sandals. Move slower, especially as the weather turns hot and steamy.

Our period of bereavement, when we feel the many feelings that accompany the loss of a loved one, is a time of “special needs,” says grief counselor and author Dr. Alan Wolfelt. It doesn’t mean we’re sick, incapacitated, or can’t do what we need to do in our changed world. It means we get to put ourselves more often at the front of the line of folks who need love, care and support.

Sometimes we may get our needs met by others. Other times, we do it ourselves. How? I’ve asked several of our counselors to share ways they enjoy the summer season and, as a result, care for themselves. They say:

In summer, I take Fridays off - sometimes -and go out on our boat. Each morning I try to run two miles and lift weights every other day. That is truly my relaxing time.  
- **Dr. John D. Canine, psychologist and president of Maximum Living Consultants, Inc.**

Things that I do to enjoy in Michigan summers: early morning walks before the day gets busy. Eating meals outside. Being by water: a pool, beach, or visiting our beautiful lakes. Seeing at least one Lake Michigan sunset. It takes my breath away! It’s important for me and my family to slow down, enjoy each other and try to be a little more carefree over the summer months.  
- **Jenny Parmenter, Group Facilitator, MacDonald Funeral Home, Howell, MI.**

Being here in Arkansas, we have the beautiful forest and my husband and I love to take our three dogs, Sandy, Peanut and Gracie, out with us to hike the trails at Pinnacle Mountain. It is so relaxing to be out in nature. The dogs are so much fun and bring out the light heartedness in us.  
- **Janet Breen, Group Facilitator, Roller Chenal, England, Drummond and Owen Funeral Homes, Little Rock, and England, AR.**



Enjoying the many flavors of summer.

I too am a water person. I love to swim, hot tub, listen to water, be around the water. Before having surgery three years ago, I went to a hypnotist to help ease the anxiety of the upcoming surgery (bilateral knee replacements). He said anytime I was near water, heard water, drank water, that I would be more calm. I have my counseling office inside a church building. When needing a break between clients I will often go into church and turn on the baptismal font and walk or do some Tai Chi. It centers me and invigorates me.  
- **Lori Poyer, Group Facilitator, Pray Funeral Home, Charlotte, MI.**

Living in Florida for over 12 years has made me appreciate air conditioning. Growing up in southern New Jersey, we had one air conditioner in my mother’s bedroom where my brothers and I would fight for the space closest to the window unit. When I moved to Florida, most people have air conditioning and retreat to their homes and other indoor places during the summer months. My children and I spend a lot of time going to the community pool and/or local water park. Spending the past five summers at the same pool, we have made new “pool” friends. I watched people come, go, marry, have children, graduate high school, start school, grow older, become disabled, have family members die, and each summer I look forward to “catching” up on everyone’s life. It doesn’t matter if it is a community pool, senior center, local eatery, the corner store or a local playground, a sense of belonging is so important to all of us.

- **Marsha Arias, Group Facilitator, T.M. Ralph Funeral Homes, Plantation, FL.**

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## Preplanning Your Funeral: The Ultimate Gift of Love

by Emily B. Trahan, LLPC

We often plan for things that may not even happen. We buy insurance because it can give us a peace of mind by covering life's uncertainties. We insure our homes, our cars, our health in case of emergency.

However, we often **don't** plan for something that will definitely happen to all of us. Life's only certainty is that someday we will all die.

Let's face it – no one wants to think or talk about death. One author states: Life isn't supposed to be perfect, but it is supposed to be long. We don't want to think about the end of life, even when we sense it is approaching for ourselves, or those we love.

Yet, one thing we can hope for in this life is to have our family as prepared as possible when death occurs.

### Questions I might ask myself:

- 1) If my death occurred tomorrow, who would arrange my funeral?
- 2) If my death occurred tomorrow, what would I want for my funeral? What would it include?
- 3) If my death occurred tomorrow, what would I expect my funeral to cost?
- 4) If my death occurred tomorrow, where would the money to pay for my funeral come from?



According to Dr. John Canine, author of What Am I Going To Do With Myself When I Die? (1999), preplanning your funeral not only gives you a chance to have a "last statement" to the world about the reasons you have lived, but also removes the "at-need" funeral responsibilities from your family, leaving them with the peace of mind that your funeral wishes will be honored.

He also states, everyone needs a "death plan". Things such as patient rights, advance directives, living wills, hospice care, and estate planning are all part of "end-of-life" decisions and need to be discussed with family. The **ultimate gift of love** is preplanning your funeral.

### Preplanning and prefuning:

- Eliminates the emotional overspending from grief.
- Lets you make your wishes known.
- Gives you a chance to personalize your funeral.
- Guarantees the cost of your funeral contract even with inflation.
- Permits your family to focus on the rituals of grief.
- Allows for your funeral to be transferable if you move.
- May be counted as an exempt asset when applying for Medicaid.\*
- Is the ultimate gift of love.

\*Please refer to laws in your state for specific information.

### Some thoughts people have had about preplanning:

It's a good feeling knowing that the plans were made by me. Who knows better than I how I want things to occur at my death.

Having my family participate in some of the decision-making process, they may feel it is beneficial that their grief is being acknowledged.

With this task out of the way, one may feel a sense of relief in knowing that one's wishes are known to those who will be taking on the trying task of planning a loved one's funeral.

People feel very strongly about their death, and "I don't care what you do with my body, I am dead" really means "I do care. I know what I DON'T want happening."

I didn't mind, because I knew I wasn't dying.

It was easy to talk to my future husband about our funeral plans, even though it is not a topic that comes up when people think about their future together.

This is the last thing I could do for my family to help ensure they would be okay after I died.



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#### CARE PARTNERS

**Arkansas Dept. of Health Hospice**  
Russellville, AR  
**Hospice Care Network**  
Westbury, NY

**Hospice of Salina**  
Salina, KS  
**Tomorrow's Child**  
Lansing, MI

## Grief Resource Center

For Additional Resources, please visit: [www.maximumlivingconsult.com](http://www.maximumlivingconsult.com)

### ORGANIZATIONS FOR SUPPORT

**Compassionate Friends for Bereaved Parents**  
P.O. Box 3696 • Oak Brook, IL 60522 • 630-990-0010  
<http://www.compassionatefriends.org>

#### Widowed Persons

1909 K Street, NW • Washington, DC 20049  
WidowNet: <http://www.fortnet.org/WidowNet>

### WEBSITES WORTH SURFIN'

**Last Memories**-<http://www.last-memories.com>  
& [www.pets-memories.com](http://www.pets-memories.com)

**Bereavement Magazine**-<http://bereavementmag.com>

**GriefNet**-<http://rivendell.org>

**Centering Corporation** - [www.centering.org](http://www.centering.org)

**Willowgreen**-(James E. Miller)-<http://willowgreen.com>

**Journey of Hearts** - [www.journeyofhearts.org](http://www.journeyofhearts.org)

**For Teens Experiencing Loss** - [www.fireinmyheart.com](http://www.fireinmyheart.com)

**WidowNet** - [www.widownet.org](http://www.widownet.org)

### SUGGESTED READINGS

**The Challenge of Living**, by John D. Canine, Ed.D., Ph.D.  
(call 866-540-0047 to order) Ball Publishers, 1983.

**The Mourning Handbook**, by H. Fitzgerald. New York: Fireside, 1994

**Finding Your Way After Your Spouse Dies**, by M. Felber. Ave Maria Press, 2000.

**Death Without Denial, Grief Without Apology**, by B. Roberts. Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 2002.

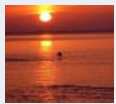
**Living with Grief: Children, Adolescents and Loss**, by J. Gordon and K. Doka. Hospice Foundation of America, 2000.

**The Bereaved Parent**, by H. Schiff. N Y: Crown, 1977.

**Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss**, by Hope Edelman. Dell Publishing, 1994.

**A Different Season: A Practical Guide for Growth While Grieving a Death**, by J. Pfeiffer. Memphis, TN: Landscapes Publishing, 1997.

**Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief**, by M. W. Hickman. Avon Books, 1994.



### Summertime Remembrances



Camping trips, picnics, reunions, birthday and anniversary parties—these are all times when family and friends may gather in the summer months to meet each other, play and catch up on what's happening in everyone's lives. It may also be a time to honor and remember loved ones who have died.

It may be the time a loved one's ashes are spread, or buried. Maybe a tree is planted or a bench dedicated as a ritual of remembrance. We may have a picnic at the cemetery after we tidy family graves and read headstones that bring to mind those that lived before us.

Perhaps we'll take that first trip to the family cabin after a loved one has died, and sit around a campfire telling stories and sharing family histories. All that we do connects the present to the past, and often helps us to move into the future.

What might you do this summer?

"Our next Support Group meeting is Thursday at 7 p.m.," says the cheerful voice at the other end. "I hope you can join us." Your possible response?

- Yes, I'm coming. These meetings mean a lot to me.
- I wonder what that group is like?
- Do I really still need the group?
- I want to see Sue again and find out how she handled her anniversary date.

#### What have others said about coming to Support Group?

"I come to support group to bring the sadness out. We all have so much in common and a bond is formed. This is one of the best things you can do to get the sadness out and in the open. It is okay to cry and share." – Sylvia, after death of her husband.

### Sharing with my New Friends at Support Group

"Come to group and don't be afraid to share your feelings, or just listen."- Elaine, after the death of her husband.

"This journey is so hard and lonely – I need to be with those who are also walking this path." –Sam, after his wife's death.

"I look for outside help with those who have experienced the same loss."- Chuck, after the death of his wife.

"I started coming for me, to talk about Fred and have someone listen. Then I came to learn how others coped with being alone. I learned how to put gas in my car and change the furnace filter - from another widow!! Now I come to be there for others, like those who were there for me." - Evelyn, widowed after 56 years of marriage.

## **Maximum Living Support Groups**

*The purpose of the Support Group is to come together and encourage each other during this time of loss. The meetings are part of the community outreach program of our Funeral Home and are available at no charge. Please join us. Friends and family members are always welcome.*

**The following Support Group is available in your area, for a complete listing, please go to: [www.maximumlivingconsult.com](http://www.maximumlivingconsult.com)**

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