

Maximum Living Newsletter

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

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Things to Consider as We Make Funeral Plans

by John D. Canine, Ph.D.

The following are excerpts from two video presentations that appear on the website www.ouraftercare.com. Please visit the website to meet Dr. Canine in person and hear his thoughts on several topics relating to grief and loss.

“The Value of a Cemetery”

All of our grief emotions need to be objectified. By that, I mean feelings need to be directed toward and locked in to the appropriate person, place, or thing. When I am sad, what is the object of my sadness? When I am angry, what has caused my anger? When I am happy, what has made me happy? Identifying the object of a particular feeling is a characteristic of a healthy mind.

The Cemetery is a Place for Emotions

The cemetery is a place where a lot of grief feelings can be identified along with the object – most of the time the object will be the buried loved one. When I go to the cemetery and visit my Dad’s gravesite, I am happy as I remember all the good times we had. I am also sad because I miss him. Sometimes I have felt guilty about a few of those insignificant conflicts we had. All of these emotions are directed toward my father and the gravesite. That’s why we say a trip to the cemetery is a ritual. It means we remember the loved one and the relationship we had with the person who is now dead. We take the time to think about the past, perhaps talk to the loved one about what is happening in the present, then move on with our lives again.



Remembering my Loved Ones

Rituals at the Cemetery

I remember reading about a family who went to the cemetery together and read a letter they had composed to their dad. The letter updated him on what had happened in the past year. It also included declarations of how much the family missed him. The ritual concluded with one of the daughters doing a cartwheel on her father’s grave. Her father had always loved watching her do cartwheels, and she did one for him on this day of remembrance. Her ability to do the cartwheel was also a way for her and her family to let their dad know that they were still able to feel joy in their lives. The cemetery is a very valuable place in the life of someone working through grief.

Keep in mind cemetery arrangements should be an item on the funeral contract. Not only is it a funeral expense, but it also has a great impact on the survivors’ future emotional stability. (For instance, if the cemetery is not well maintained, survivors may feel guilty that they did not provide the “best” for their loved one.) The cemetery arrangements should meet state requirements for burial, religious expectations, the individual’s vault and monument requests, the desire for perpetual care, and the need for future burial plots. The funeral firm will have knowledge about all your burial options and the location of the cemetery that will best meet your need.

“Cremation is Okay”

Often someone will ask me, “Dr. Canine, I want to be cremated, is that alright?” The answer is absolutely! Society views cremation as a sanitary disposal of the body. The Bible says, “from ashes to ashes.” Cremation is perfectly acceptable. However, I must quickly add cremation should not be chosen because it is less expensive or because it is quick. With every cremation there should be a funeral service, memorial service, or a celebration of life service. All of these services can be with the body present or with the ashes (sometime called cremains) present. In reality there are a lot more options for your funeral director with cremation. And, the funeral home is not limited by any time restraints. I know families that have brought the cremains back to the funeral home a month after the death and had a memorial service.

Cremains are Mobile

You should also consider, that unlike ground burial, the cremains are very mobile, wherever you go the cremains can go with you in an urn, vase, or a variety of other containers. These containers even include rings and necklaces that hold a small portion of the loved one’s cremains. When the cremains are divided many family members can have their own keepsake. The funeral director will assist you in dividing the cremains if this is your choice.

I also must point out that there are many options if a family wants a permanent place

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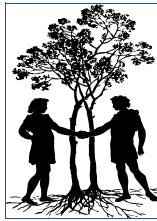
Highly Effective Grievers: How They Do It

by Emily B Trahan, LLPC

Victor M. Parachin, author and grief educator, states, "Many people have experienced the deep wound of grief, but emerged from it to live satisfying, fulfilling lives. They are beacons of light for those experiencing a dark night of the soul." He explains there are valuable lessons we can learn from loss, and outlines seven habits of highly effective grievers:

Habit 1: Let friends help.

Friendship can help during times of loneliness. Those who work through loss know that trying to go through it alone doesn't always get them very far. You don't have to pretend you're fine with friends. They are there to be supportive. A woman in support group once said: "Every time someone asked me to do something or go somewhere, I said yes. It didn't matter what it was. I just knew it was good for me to accept every invitation, whether I felt like it or not."



Habit 2: Allow yourself to grieve and do grief work.

Effective grievers often ignore keeping a stiff upper lip, being brave, getting over it, and moving on. It just isn't realistic. There is a reason the grief process is called grief "work". It is a natural reaction to losing something important and it takes effort. We don't always want to feel the pain and answer questions like, "Now what?" and "How do I live meaningfully without ___?" Allow yourself to experience grief, even when unpleasant and unfamiliar.

Habit 3: Seek information.

Few individuals know much about the grief process before they experience an actual loss. For many, grief can be confusing, frustrating, and unsettling. Those who look for books, magazine articles, or websites can often find comfort in information. "When I'm having a bad day and wonder if what I'm feeling is normal, I go to the bookstore or library," says a man who lost his wife. "I feel better knowing more about grief and some of the common experiences."



Habit 4: Avoid hasty decisions.

It is often recommended to wait a year before making major changes. Why? During the first year, grief can make it hard to make decisions. Sometimes after emotions settle down and endless paperwork is finally completed, the mind is free to make wiser decisions. Of course, financial considerations can force decisions, but if it can be helped, it's best to wait or seek advice from professionals and family.

Habit 5: Join a grief support group.

Earl Grollman, author and counselor explains, "At some point you may be disappointed in the reactions of acquaintances, maybe even your close friend. You just don't hear from them so often anymore. They seem awkward and uneasy in your presence. That's why support groups have been successful...people in these groups understand your fears and frustrations; they have been there before. You are no longer alone."

Habit 6: Take care of yourself physically.

Grief can take its toll on your body. Increased stress can make us more prone to illness or cause physical symptoms like high blood pressure or muscle tension. Effective grievers take care of themselves, even if it seems difficult. Physical exercise and eating healthy can give the body energy and nourishment that is hard to find elsewhere. Adequate rest can regenerate. Avoid drugs and alcohol since it may only numb or postpone grief.



Habit 7: Seek professional help when necessary.

There is nothing wrong with getting help from a mental health clinic, counselor, or clergy member. The grief journey can be stressful and it can help to talk to someone who understands the road and can help you navigate challenging territories.

Adapted from Parachin's "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Grievers", appearing in *The Director*, January 2005.



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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

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

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

GriefNet-<http://rivendell.org>

Centering Corporation - www.centering.org

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

Journey of Hearts - www.journeyofhearts.org

For Teens Experiencing Loss - www.fireinmyheart.com

WidowNet - www.widownet.org

OurAfterCare - ouraftercare.com

SUGGESTED READINGS

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

After Goodbye: How to Begin Again After the Death of Someone You Love, by T. Menten. Running Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1994.

Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories That Heal, by R. N. Remen. Riverhead, New York, 1996.

Give Sorrow Words: A Father's Passage Through Grief, by T. Crider. Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill, NC, 1996.

Life Lessons, by E. Kubler-Ross and D. Kessler. Scribner, NY, 2000.

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

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

A Grief Observed, by C.S. Lewis. Bantam Books, 1961.

Things to Consider...

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for the cremains. They include:

- Scattering the ashes; a kind of "giving back to nature"
- Placing the urn in the ground (burial)
- Putting the urn in a mausoleum
- Or, placing the urn or ashes in a memorial garden.



I must admit most of us are not educated as to all the options with cremation. There are many. The funeral director knows and understands all of these options and will help you design the appropriate one for you and your family. Remember the most important thing with all this, is to show the love and respect your loved one deserves by celebrating the life he/she lived.

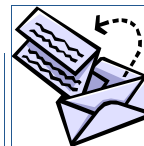
Around the Corner I Have a Friend...

Around the corner I have a friend,
In this great city that has no end,
Yet the days go by and weeks rush on,
And before I know it, a year is gone.

And I never see my old friends face,
For life is a swift and terrible race,
He knows I like him just as well,
As in the days when I rang his bell.

And he rang mine
but we were younger then,
And now we are busy, tired men.
Tired of playing a foolish game,
Tired of trying to make a name.
"Tomorrow" I say! "I will call on Jim
just to show that I'm thinking of him."

But tomorrow comes
and tomorrow goes,
And distance between us
grows and grows.
Around the corner, yet miles away,



"Here's a telegram, sir. Jim died today."

That's what we get
and deserve in the end.

Around the corner,
a vanished friend.

Remember to always
say what you mean.

If you love someone, tell them.
Don't be afraid to express yourself.
Reach out and tell someone
what they mean to you.

Because when you decide
that it is the right time
It might be too late.

Seize the day. Never have regrets.
Stay close to your friends and family,
For they have helped make you the
person that you are today.

-Author Unknown

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
