

Maximum Living Newsletter

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

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 2009 - WINTER EDITION

What Helps?

A Story of One Family’s Journey Through Grief

The following is a letter written to a Funeral Home director, and forwarded to Dr. Canine. It reflects our basic philosophy about a Grief Support Group as a resource on one’s journey through grief.

My name is Debbie. My husband Cass passed away in September of 2007. I don’t know if you remember me with all of the families you’ve helped in their time of grief. You will probably remember if I mention that we were the family that had Cass’ luncheon at Louie’s Pizzeria. We brought back pizza for all of you, but you were not there at the time.

This last Saturday (September, 2008), family and friends met for dinner at Louie’s in honor of Cass. The next time you go there, you’ll have to look at the etched glass that I had made for Louie. It has Cass’ picture on it with a message. Louie also hung the article featured in the newspaper for his restaurant with Cass’ picture. Both pictures are by the last booth before you go into the bar location.

A Difficult Year

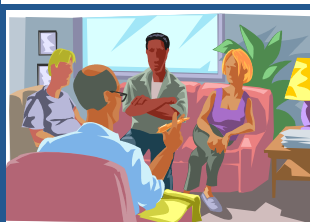
I am writing you to thank you for the extended services that are offered by the funeral home in coping with the loss of a loved one. Cass has been gone for a year, and it’s been an extremely hard year for my sons, family, friends and me. I have lost extended family members and friends, and all losses are a tragedy. I had been extremely blessed not to have to experience the grief of losing a loved one. Yet, unless you’ve experienced the loss of someone close to you, you can’t really explain what one goes through.

In November of last year, I decided to go to the support meeting at the Shelby location with Dr. Canine facilitating the meetings. I am glad I made the decision and I am still going.

The meetings are helpful. As an individual who has lost a loved one, we know we are not the only one suffering. People have to go through it every day; reality is attending the meetings with others grieving a loss.

Everyone in the group is so nice and understanding. The atmosphere is open and relaxing. I believe Dr. Canine is the reason for this. His

experience, support and stories are a positive contribution to the group. We talk, share individual stories, laugh, cry. There is a lot of emotion in the group. Since I’ve attended the meetings, there is always a good turnout. The majority



The meetings are helpful.

of the people have been attending long before I have. Every month, there are new individuals attending. Last month there was a person there who hadn’t attended in a while. He came to let the group know he was getting married. Having him return to share his announcement with everyone is encouraging. It shows positive results from the group meetings. There seems to be a bond that develops between support group members to help one another.

A Long Road Ahead

My sons and I still have difficult times. We know we have a long road ahead of us. Cass would not want us to be hurting like we are. He would always say: “Don’t worry about me. I’ll be okay, things could be worse.” The worst did happen. With me, the help of Dr. Canine, going to the group meetings, and having family and friends will hopefully help. Both of my sons have their girl friends, family and my support. Hopefully, in time the three of us will be able to talk more openly without getting upset. I know I need to be strong for them. I don’t want them hurt anymore than they already are.

Thank you again for your help and the funeral home with providing the support group with Dr. Canine.

Ten Things to Tell A Child About the Death of a Loved One

by John D. Canine, Ed.D., Ph.D.

Tell the child as soon as possible about the death.

It is important to start with what the child knows. For example, if a grandfather has been going to the hospital for chemotherapy treatments, one might begin a conversation by saying, “Remember all those trips Grandfather made to the hospital?” When appropriate, it is also important to touch

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SAD vs. Sadness in the Winter Months

by Emily B Trahan, LPC

It gets darker earlier, the temperature drops, and the skies aren't quite as sunny. Like many people, you may develop cabin fever during the winter months. You may find yourself sleeping more or feeling down. It may seem easier just to hibernate until spring when the weather is warmer and the days are longer and brighter.

While these are common reactions to seasonal changes, some people experience more than sadness when summer shifts to fall and as fall brings the winter months. The "winter blues" may be more than just toughing out the season. It may be Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

According to Dr. James Adomo, Seasonal Affective Disorder is a type of depression caused by a reaction to decreased environmental light. The darkness and cloudiness of the winter months can have an effect on mood, especially in northern regions and climates.

Common characteristics of SAD include:

- Lack of energy
- Social withdrawal
- Weight gain
- Oversleeping
- Appetite changes, especially craving high carbohydrate foods
- Hopelessness
- Difficulty concentrating and processing information
- Lost of interest in activities once enjoyed

These characteristics are usually cyclical and feel like more

than cabin fever or winter blues. It is difficult to identify a specific cause, but factors like genetics, age, and the body's natural chemical make-up can influence seasonal mood changes.

Being sensitive to annual light and climate changes may make it more difficult to cope with other life stressors, such as a death in the family, especially during winter.

What helps?

- 1) Make your environment brighter – open blinds, use bright lamps
- 2) Get out on sunny days
- 3) Exercise regularly to relieve the stress that increases symptoms
- 4) Take care of yourself – get enough rest, eat a balanced diet, relax
- 5) Practice stress management
- 6) Socialize and stay connected to people
- 7) If possible, take a trip so somewhere sunny and warm to recharge



For those experiencing SAD, winter can be difficult. Adding the death of a loved one can be overwhelming. If the feelings you are experiencing are more than you can cope with on your own, try talking with a counselor, or members of a support group. They can help.

Ten Things to Tell... *(cont. from page 1)*

the child. This gives the child a sense of security. Be gentle, trustful, and chose a place to talk that is comfortable, safe, and familiar.

Be truthful.

Do not make up stories that will have to be changed later. This only confuses the child and promotes emotional instability. Also, withholding information can be a threat to the child. Emphasis needs to be placed on the facts. For example, "dead is dead," and "buried" means "in the ground." Euphemisms such as "passed away," "expired," or "departed" should be avoided.

Share only the details the child is ready to hear.

Children will accept a crisis much like an adult. Therefore, to make it real in their mind, they need a logical explanation of why the person died. However, they may not be ready to accept all the facts surrounding the death. Children mentally reprocess the information about the death of a loved one at each developmental level. A child later in life may ask a parent, "Tell me again how my brother died."

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Maximum Living Consultants, Inc.
Bereavement Aftercare Services

936 S. Baldwin Rd., Suite 102 • Clarkston, MI 48348 • 248-814-0706
www.maximumlivingconsult.com • E-Mail: info@maximumlivingconsult.com

John D. Canine, Ed.D., Ph.D.
President

Nanci K. Canine
Vice-President

Shirley A. Brogan, LPC
Coordinator, Counselor
Support Services

Emily B. Trahan, LPC
Counselor Support Services

Yasmine Carron
Administrative Assistant

Nicole Lennox
Administrative Assistant

SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATORS

Marsha Levine Arias, LCSW
Kayla Avery, MS
Martha Biskup, MSW, CT
Jan Borgman, LISW, CGC
Janet Breen, LAC
Shirley Brogan, LPC
Larry Davidson
Maria DeWitt, MA, LPC
Betty Hickman
Rebecca Hicks, LCSW
Joyce Jones, LCSW

Brad Kimbrell, LMSW
Crystal D. Kimmer, LSW
Gail Martin, LMSW
Vivian Lozada, LMHC
Walt McKay, LPC
Mary Sue McNutt, LCSW
Kim Moseley, LCSW
Pat Mroch, LPC
John Naile, M. Div.
Kathleen A. Nederhoed
Sue Nickerson, LPC

Jennifer Parmenter, LMSW
Lori Poyer, LMSW
Karen Schultz, LCSW
Trieneke M. Self
Patricia Simmons, LSW
Julie Smith, LLMFT
Marjorie Thomas, MSW
Vickey Thompson, LPC
Emily B. Trahan, LPC
Ellen Tucker, MSW, CSW
Mary Jane Ward, LPC

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

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

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.

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.

Ten Things to Tell a Child...

(Continued from page 2)

This gives the adult an opportunity to deliver information not shared previously.

Encourage the child to express feelings.

A child relies upon the adult for permission to "feel" the loss. For the first few years, children get their understanding of grief through their senses, so it is important for adults to "feel" their grief in the presence of the child. Cry, get angry, be sad together. Most important, don't be afraid to hold each other.

Take the child to the funeral.

Seeing is believing, and even young children should be able to view the body. The child does not have to be present during all of the visitation hours; should have the security of having an adult present at all times; should be allowed to touch the body but not be forced to do so; should be allowed to participate in the rituals for the purpose of expressing grief and recalling the event later in life, and should be able to observe those who are

mourning.

Take the child to the cemetery, even if the person is already buried.

The child will find comfort in knowing where the body is buried and how to get there. The grave site can be where the child makes "contact" with the loved one. Furthermore, periodically taking the child to the cemetery lessens the chances of the child denying

or avoiding the death.

Let the child tell others about the death.

Often when children are with an adult and the child is questioned about

how the loved one died, the adult will respond and "talk over" the child. The child feels more in control and has greater understanding of the loss when he or she can explain it to another



person.

Encourage the child to talk about the loss.

When a child talks about the death, not only are feelings often expressed, but if the child has incorrect ideas about any aspect of the loss, it can be brought to the adult's attention and corrected.

Be available to answer the child's questions.

Adults need to answer each question as sincerely and accurately as possible, and with the understanding that some questions cannot be answered. More important than the ability to answer a question is being available to discuss each concern as it arises.

Never say "You shouldn't feel like that."

Encourage the child to express anger, sorrow, loneliness, fear – any feeling the child has. If the child is told "not to feel" by the adult, the message the child receives is one of coping with loss by emotionally "playing dead." This type of repression may make it difficult to express emotions later in life.

Maximum Living Support Groups

The purpose of the Support Group is to come together and encourage each other during this time of loss. These 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

On healing: Once I was there. Now I am here. And it occurs to me that I couldn't have gotten from there to here all by myself. - William A. Ritter