

# Maximum Living Newsletter

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

Maximum Living Consultants, Inc. • May, June July, 2007

## MEETING OUR NEEDS ON OUR JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF

by Shirley A. Brogan, LPC

**P**ick up a book. A good-sized book, maybe at least 1 ½ inches thick and 6 x 8 inches in size. Your son’s math textbook. That favorite cookbook you have in the kitchen. Hold it in your hand, parallel to the ground, between your thumb and remaining fingers. Hold it away from your body. Keep it that way for a minute. Getting tired? Does your hand, or arm, begin to ache? What would happen if someone took the other end of the book and held it with you? Or, maybe the person would hold the book for you a while, so you can let go and rest a bit?

How long could you hold the book if someone was there to help you? Dr. John D. Canine, grief psychotherapist, author and president of Maximum Living Consultants, Inc., in Clarkston, MI, uses this to illustrate how we may use help from others on our journey through grief. Sharing as companions. Getting a respite when we need it.

### When we lose love, it hurts

“The grief journey is very painful simply because when we lose love, it hurts,” Dr.

Canine says. He believes that avoidance is a common response. People don’t want to deal with it. They are uncomfortable with the natural grief responses, like tears, missing someone, and loneliness one feels if that person was a big part of the griever’s life.

Many times, people say “I just keep busy” as a way to cope. Dr. Canine says his response to that is “be careful. What we need is balance in our lives. We need times when we cry hard, and when we laugh hard.” The words from the Bible’s Book of Ecclesiastes, he says, tell us that there is a time for many different aspects of our lives, including a time to mourn, and to laugh.

Grief is a composite of the **inward feelings** we have, he says. A short list of feelings includes: sad, disbelief, longing, weary, angry, anxious, empty, numb, confused, helpless and overwhelmed.

Mourning is **bringing those feelings outside of us**. It is letting your anger out, in a safe way, says Dr. Canine. We may have mourning rituals, which are special things we do to address the feelings we have. A visit to the cemetery can be a time to express sadness. Walking and talking with a friend twice a week may be a time to express longing, confusion and feelings of being overwhelmed.



“What we need is balance in our lives.”

The most common mourning ritual we have as human beings is to cry. Unfortunately, we often apologize for, or try to hide our tears.

“We are not a death-accepting society,” says Dr. Canine. He believes this relates to hedonism, a term which comes from the Greek word “hedon”, or pleasure. Hedonism is the desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain. He believes this might be changing in our society as individuals become more open about such things as terminal illness.

There are times when it is helpful to share with others on our journey through grief.

### Resources for sharing include:

- Grief and loss workshops, or educational programs, to learn more about what to expect, and what others are experiencing on this journey through grief.
- A counselor, social worker or psychologist whose practice includes addressing loss and change. They can determine what help might be needed if grief responses are causing significant life problems.

- Support Groups that may be sponsored by a church, community center or funeral home, again to feel the camaraderie of others.
- Family events, like holiday gatherings, summer picnics, birthday and anniversary parties, to share the stories and celebrate connections.
- Time together with another person going through a similar loss, such as lunch with a neighbor who is also a widow.

There are also times when each of us may choose to go it alone.

### Resources for those solitary moments include:

- A journal or dairy, kept to record thoughts, feelings, events, memories, hopes for the future.
- Prayer and meditation. The sadness and slowing down we often feel gives time for self-reflection and meeting needs of

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**Meeting Our Needs...***(Continued from page 1)*

our inner space.

- Lighting a candle, to honor and remember.
- Wearing, or carrying a memento, such as a pin, or favorite sweater, or pocketing a keepsake coin. Putting a special photo in my purse, or wallet.



Putting a special photo in my purse, or wallet.

Think about that book. How big is it? How heavy? It has been said that even though each person's grief is unique, mourning is a social event. We grieve because we love, and sharing the hurt may be a positive way to cope.


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 Russellville, AR

Tomorrow's Child  
 Lansing, MI

**Away at College  
 When Someone Dies**

By Beverly K. Wilson  
 RN, MA, LLPC

Being away at college is a new adventure for young adults. They are learning to be independent individuals, making new friends, and struggling with a bit of homesickness. Young adults are busy planning for their futures, assuming life will remain as it is now. Home is a place you can go when times are tough, family will always be there for you, and only the very elderly who have lived long lives are going to die.

If someone dies, the assumption that the world is a safe and fair place is challenged. Away at college when death occurs at home, students may feel "left out" of family activities. Because of the geographic separation, college students may be at a different place in the grief process than their families are, when students are finally able to return home.

When hearing of a death in the family, what can bereaved young adults on college campuses do to help themselves?

**1) Ask for extensions on school work.** Approach your professors and explain your situation. Ask to have several days off as excused absences. Request extensions for homework assignments. Inquire about making up exams you will miss while traveling home. If overwhelmed, ask about receiving a grade of "Incomplete" in some of your courses, and develop a plan for completing the work within a reasonable time period. Ask whether your university has a policy for addressing the needs of bereaved students.

**2) Go home.** You need to be with your family at this time. When someone close to you dies, your family naturally pulls together. Being together in times of crisis is the place where you learn how your family copes with and understands life's toughest experiences. You will want to hug, support, comfort, and cry with your family. The physical need for human touch must be met and cannot be satisfied by cell phones, e-mails, and text messaging. Even if the loss is the death of a beloved family pet, you may feel the need to go home. The death of a pet who has been in your family since your infancy can feel like the death of a brother or sister.

**3) Are you a "doer" or a "talker"?** What helps you most as you grieve? Do you need to talk about what happened, how you received the news, and your memories of someone loved? If so, find some good listeners. Or, do you feel better taking a heavier course load and putting in more hours at your part-time job? If so, get busy staying busy. People grieve differently. Find what works for you.

**4) Locate a grief support group on campus.** If your college campus does not provide a grief support group, inquire at the campus health clinic about a support group in a local church, funeral home, or hospice. A support group can help you understand fleeting thoughts of suicide, monitor risky behavior (drugs, alcohol,

## Grief Resource Center

For Additional Resources, please visit the [GRIEF RESOURCE CENTER](http://www.maximumlivingconsult.com) at: [www.maximumlivingconsult.com](http://www.maximumlivingconsult.com)

### SUGGESTED READINGS

- Being a Widow.** by Lynn Caine. Penguin Books, 1990.
- Helping Children Cope with the Loss of a Loved One: A Guide for Grown-Ups.** by W. C. Kroen. Free Spirit Publishing, 1966. ([www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com) to order)
- What's Heaven?** by Maria Shriver. St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- The Challenge of Living,** by John D. Canine, Ed.D., Ph.D. (call 866-540-0047 to order) Ball Publishers, 1983.
- Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss,** by Hope Edelman. Dell Publishing, 1994.
- A Grief Observed,** by C.S. Lewis. Bantam Books, 1961.
- The Mourning Handbook,** by H. Fitzgerald. Fireside, 1994.
- Why Are the Casseroles Always Tuna? A Loving Look at the Lighter Side of Grief,** by D. Sims. Big A & Co., 1999.

### COUNSELOR RESOURCE

North Shore Wellness Services, Ltd., Northbrook, IL  
 Noah C. Weinstein, MA, LPC (312) 513-1629.  
[www.northshorewellness.com](http://www.northshorewellness.com)

### WEBSITES WORTH SURFIN'

- Centering Corporation** - [www.centering.org](http://www.centering.org)  
**Willowgreen**-(James E. Miller)-<http://willowgreen.com>  
**Bereavement Magazine**-<http://bereavementmag.com>

### AFFIRMATIONS for My Changed Life

*Today I will put a very large stop sign in front of any unpleasant thought. When I stop the thought, I will replace it with something meaningful, fun, beautiful and pleasant.*

*I will grow today as a person. I may not grow a lot, but I will be something today that I was not yesterday.*



**Everyone is gifted in some way and some manner. Keeping your gift(s) to yourself is a waste. Decide today to use all of your gifts for the betterment of self and others.**

— Dr. John D. Canine

### 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>

### Away at College... *(Continued from page 2)*

sex, reckless driving), appropriately channel anger, and normalize the drop in your grades.

#### 5) Take it easy 3 to 6 months after your loss.

Research indicates the toughest time in your grief journey usually occurs three to six months after the death. During that time period, you may experience physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach problems, mental confusion, hair loss, menstrual irregularities, and a tendency to be accident-prone. Consider taking fewer courses or reducing your number of extracurricular activities. Travel home more frequently to be with your family. Watch your grades. A drop in grades is normal, but you do not want to jeopardize your financial assistance by a significant drop in your grade point average.

#### 6) Allow your loved one to serve as your inspiration.

College students often report experiencing a new enthusiasm for success, honoring the memory of the person who died. Be grateful for the life of the one who loved you and wished the best for you. Work hard at your studies! Be proud when you are handed that well-deserved diploma. Upon graduation, express your appreciation for the special person or people who inspired you by writing a "thank-you" note or visiting the cemetery with a bouquet of flowers. Tell them your dreams for the future.



Tell your dreams.

If you are the friend of a bereaved college student, how can you help? First of all, acknowledge the death. We sometimes avoid talking about a person who died because we are afraid we will "remind" the survivors of their loss. In actuality, they are thinking about their loved one . . . all the time. Begin helpful and healing conversations with statements or questions such as, "Tell me about . . .", "What do you miss most about...?", or "What is the funniest thing that ever happened to you and...?" You might be surprised at how relieved and grateful your friend is that you asked the question. You might also realize how much your own losses are healed.

## **Maximum Living Support Groups**

*The purpose of the Support Group is to come together and draw strength and support from 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 feel free to attend and know that your 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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