

Our Grove Park Family is faithfully dedicated to restoring dignity, offering hope and providing comfort



Helping Grieving Children Returning to School

It's the middle of Summer break and time to start preparing your children to return to school well equipped to handle the stresses of it all. Yes, children and teens have stress too. Change is hard for everyone. Hopefully, the following will help. Mourning children and teens will not only be facing the stresses of a new school year soon; they will have the additional stress of dealing with all the changes in their lives caused by the death of their loved ones. Unfortunately many of these children will not receive adequate support and comfort to meet their special needs.

What do mourning children returning to school need?
First of all they need to feel safe, secure and cared for. After a death, the world becomes a scary, unpredictable place for any age mourner, but especially for a child. They need a good support system of adults and authority figures.

Second, children in grief need to feel a sense of normalcy. When a death occurs, the mourning child often feels that they are no longer like all the other children in their school. In addition children in grief need to have a predictable schedule and to be involved in normal activities for children of their age.

In order to get these two primary needs met, grieving children must not only have a good support system in their home and community, but they need a good support system in their school as well. Here are some practical suggestions for parents or caregivers for grieving children to help create that good support system at the school.

- **Educate yourself** on the grief process and the special needs of mourning children before talking with your child or anyone at the school. This will help you to formulate an effective plan to meet the special needs of your child as they return to school.
- **Inform the school staff** of the child's loss. Include at least the principal, teacher, school counselor and school nurse on the list of people you inform.
- **Schedule a private session** with your child's teacher to discuss any concerns that you have about his or her return to school and the classroom.
- **Discuss with the teacher** and other staff what information can be shared with the child's friends and fellow classmates concerning the loss. Prior to this discussion assure your child that you will share only information that is necessary for others to know. Ask the staff to prepare the other students by explaining that your child has had a loss and needs understanding and support from them.
- **Encourage your child** to talk with his or her teacher (and the school counselor if possible) to share the loss and their experience in their own words.
- **Assure your child** that they don't have to answer every question if they feel uncomfortable doing so. Tell her or him that they have a right to privacy when questioned by anyone at the school.
- **Assure your child** that the teacher, counselor and other staff will be available to approach when he or she feels that need to talk.
- **Set up a plan** for when your child may be overwhelmed by his or her grief at school. One suggestion is to arrange between the child and school staff for special permission for the child to leave the classroom and go to a designated safe place to receive support and comfort. The child should understand that this permission is not an excuse to get out of everyday school work or responsibilities.
- **Make sure** the school has your phone numbers and contact information in case of emergencies.

10 COMMON EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES IN GRIEF

A state of shock:

When sorrow and the pain of loss come flooding in initially, we instinctually shut down our emotions in order to anesthetize ourselves from the grim reality we face in grief. This initial phase of grief protects us from going into emotional overload – experiencing the full impact of the loss before we can completely accept what has happened to our loved one and to us.

Overwhelming pain & emotions:

When the shock phase begins to fade, the reality of the loss hits us. The result is overwhelming pain and emotional turmoil. As we realize how dreadful the loss is, emotional release begins to be expressed, often without warning. The grief emotions inside turn into observable mourning. (Remember mourning is simply grief gone public). Immense sadness and loss usually is expressed in uncontrollable and unexpected crying. Our first instinct may be to stifle tears because we feel out of control or embarrassed. The truth is though that crying opens the way for us to acknowledge and express all grief emotions helping us to progress through grief and toward healing.

Depression & loneliness:

Feelings of utter depression and isolation are common. Grief causes us to question our deepest held beliefs – especially our beliefs about God and how He works in the world. It might seem as if God is no longer in control in His heaven – almost as if God does not care and is not present in their lives. Such depression and feelings of being all alone are normal, healthy grief responses. These feelings and thoughts will pass as we refuse to be overwhelmed by our feelings or thoughts and progress through grief.

Physical symptoms of emotional distress:

The continued emotional stress of grief can manifest itself in all sorts of physical maladies—real and/or imagined.

Experiencing panic/fear:

The emotional turmoil of grief can be overwhelming to us. Because the emotional experience is often greater than anything else we have ever endured, a sense of fear and panic is common. We begin to question our sanity and if we are doing grief “right.” An overwhelming sense of deep despair causes us to also question if we will be able to endure what lies ahead and if we will ever experience joy and happiness again.

Experiencing guilt about the loss:

We can feel real or imagined guilt for what we did or did not do for the person when he/she was alive. Guilt can develop into neurotic guilt which is all out of proportion to the reality of the involvement and control we had in the happenings surrounding the loss. Acknowledging and expressing this guilt, voicing regrets and “asking” forgiveness for perceived wrongdoings can move us toward healing from these grief wounds. We must also work toward forgiving ourselves for what we did or did not do.

Feeling anger & resentment:

These “negative” emotions are normal. However, we must admit to ourselves to acknowledge anger without giving into destructive behaviors.

Resisting a return to life:

Something inside keeps us from going back to usual activities. Perhaps it is the desire to keep the memory of the tragedy alive as a way to honor the life of the loved one lost. We fear that smiling, laughing, and experiencing joy or pleasure somehow signifies that the life of the deceased is not being honored or remembered. Since the pain of grief is a reminder of the emotional tie we have to the deceased, we become comfortable in grieving and fearful that everyone has forgotten our pain. This causes us to become stuck in our grief—failing to move on toward healing.

Realizing hope:

One day “the clouds part and the sun shines in” for us. It becomes possible for us to experience joy and pleasure once again. There is a realization that there are moments when grief does not dominate our thinking. There are still bad moments, bad days and bad weeks, but they happen less and less often. There is an overwhelming feeling of “I can make it after all.”

Struggling to affirm reality

As we move through grief, we realize that we have been changed by the experience. The deceased’s influence in our life changed us, making us better people. The loss of the person has also changed us—making us either healthier and stronger in spirit or sicker.

Help Wanted: We are always in need of Volunteers.
If you would like to assist us either administratively or make home visits please call our office and speak to Kim, our volunteer coordinator.



I am available to discuss with you and your family the process of spirituality in healing from grief and loss. If I can assist you, please call 803-536-6644 or email me at groveparkhospiceken@gmail.com

Ken Hay, Chaplain
Bereavement Care Coordinator

The Lighter Side of Grief

Mourning in America

The Pillsbury Doughboy dies yesterday of a yeast infection and complications from repeated pokes in the belly. He was 71. Doughboy was buried in a lightly greased coffin. Dozens of celebrities turned out to pay their final respects, including Mrs. Butterworth, Hungry Jack, the California Raisins, Betty Crocker, and Captain Crunch. The graveside was piled high with flours. His longtime friend, Aunt Jemima, delivered the eulogy, describing Doughboy as a man who never knew how much he was kneaded. Doughboy rose quickly in show business but his later life was filled with turnovers. He was not considered a very smart cookie, wasting much of his dough on half-baked schemes. Despite being a little flaky at times, he still, as a crusty old man, was considering a role model for millions. Doughboy is survived by his wife, Play Dough and Jane Dough; plus they have one in the oven. He is also survived by his father, Pop Tart. The funeral was held at 3:50 for about 20 minutes.

**Annual Memorial Service
is September 20th.
Make plans NOW to attend.
Details to follow soon.**

"Grief never ends... but it changes.
It's a passage, not a place to stay.
Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor
a lack of faith...
It is the price of love."

GRIEF AND HIS DUE

When Jupiter was assigning the various gods their privileges, it so happened that Grief was not present with the rest: but when all had received their share, he too entered and claimed his due. Jupiter was at a loss to know what to do, for there was nothing left for him. However, at last he decided that to him should belong the tears that are shed for the dead. Thus it is the same with Grief as it is with the other gods. The more devoutly men render to him his due, the more lavish is he of that which he has to bestow. It is not well, therefore, to mourn long for the departed; else Grief, whose sole pleasure is in such mourning, will be quick to send fresh cause for tears. Aesops Fable # 219



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Helpful Bereavement Websites:



<http://www.aarp.org/family/lifeafterloss/>
<http://www.hospicenet.org/html/bereavement.html>
<http://www.hospicefoundation.org>
<http://www.griefnet.org>
<http://goodgrief.org/grief>
<http://www.hospicehelp.org/events.htm>
http://www.tributes.com/grief_recovery_center/index
<http://www.griefrecoverymethod.com/about-us>

If you have comments, suggestions, or would like to submit a poem or article, please
contact Ken Hay, Bereavement Care Coordinator at Grove Park Hospice Care
C.S. Lewis 803.536.6644