

goodwords

news from the good grief center for bereavement support

Taking Care of Yourself While Grieving

Death is universal — the great equalizer in an unequal world. If we haven't already lost a loved one to death, somewhere in all of us, we realize that at some point in time, we will. Many will find out that we weren't as prepared as we thought we were to handle this new phenomenon called grief. With a well-defined starting point, but no visible finish line and no roadmap to guide us, grief works its way into every aspect of life. Just as the relationships with our loved ones were unique, so are our losses. No matter what the circumstances surrounding the loss, taking care of ourselves while we grieve can help to ease the transition into a new chapter of our life.

Grief is physical.

Grief can rob us of energy, change our sleeping and eating habits and suppress our immune system, making us more vulnerable to illness. Difficulty with concentration and memory makes us feel like we're losing our sanity. Though it can seem like an impossible task some days, taking care of our bodies during this intense time enables our minds to better process the life-changing events that are unfolding before us. Something as simple as walking around the block gives us another outlet for channeling emotional energy. The physical interaction with others and our environment is a reminder we are not alone. Being mindful of sleeping and eating patterns, choosing nutritious meals and snacks as well as establishing times for nighttime sleep will contribute to maintaining our strength while we grieve. Whether it's relaxing in a warm bath or walking in the woods, it's important to take time to take care of, or even pamper, ourselves.

Grief is emotional.

Many experience an emotional numbness immediately following a death. However, feelings will return often bringing a flood of intense and unexpected emotions. Anger, apathy, guilt, loneliness, sadness, irritability...the list seems endless. These will change from hour to hour, day to day, week to week. Journaling can be a wonderful way to process feelings we don't understand. Writing also gives us reference points in our grief journey. Talking about our losses with trusted friends and family reassures us that we don't have to carry the weight alone. Finding a support group enables us to share our stories and learn from others who are walking a similar path. Resisting the temptation to isolate ourselves, learning to accept help when it's offered and asking for help when it's needed will make each day a little better than the last.



Here are a few simple things that can make a big difference:

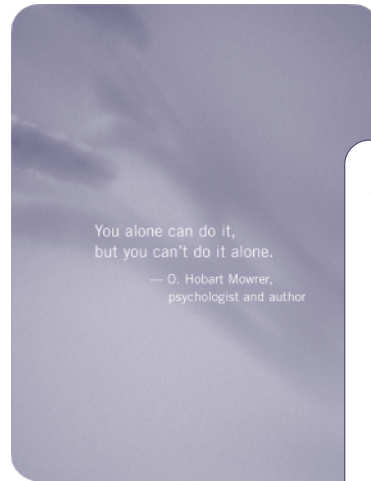
- Get plenty of rest – try a nap if sleeping at night is difficult
- Eat nourishing foods – light meals and healthy snacks can appeal when appetites are low
- Drink water -- especially on hot days
- Exercise – even a short walk can refresh
- Start a journal – writing can help make sense of grief's many thoughts and feelings
- Stay in touch with family and friends – sharing your grief can ease the pain

Remembering to take care of ourselves, a sometimes overwhelming request while in the throes of grief, will make a difficult journey more bearable. The benefits of taking good care of ourselves and establishing healthy routines will sustain us as we adjust to our new lives.

Helping Take Care – GGC’s New Care Package

“Every morning I drink in the intense colors of the orchid and am so impressed with its soothing qualities,” explains Lu Donnelly, who received the new Care Package and orchid following the death of her father-in-law. This comment and the many others we’ve heard since the launch of the new Care Package in May confirm it is having the effect we desired – providing comfort and support to those who are grieving.

Drawing the highest praise are the Quiet Moment cards pictured here. Each card in the box contains an insight as well as a practical suggestion about how to take care of oneself while grieving. In describing the cards, Lu and EJ Donnelly noted, “They are brief and easy to read with uplifting and reassuring thoughts. We loved the contrast of the quotes from three different perspectives: a professional writer, a ‘regular’ person and a professional counselor.”



A Quiet Moment Card, shown front and back.



staff spotlight

Jan McCarthy:



GGC is thrilled to welcome Jan McCarthy to the GGC team. Jan joined the staff in June as a Program Manager. Jan will focus on our Grief in the Workplace program as well as working to meet the ever growing need for GGC’s peer support and other services.

Jan began her work with the bereaved nine years ago as a volunteer with Catholic Charities Bereavement Support Ministry. The passion she developed for this work inspired her to seek a higher level of education in a profession that would connect her with bereaved individuals. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at LaRoche College and then a Master of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh. Jan’s personal mission, which is directly aligned to that of GGC, is to instill hope in the hearts of the grieving through support and education. “Jan brings a wealth of knowledge, wonderful skills and a passion to help people,” noted Associate Director Marilyn Chapla. “We are thrilled to have her as part of our GGC team.”

Wishes Do Come True

We’d like to thank the following individuals for responding to the Wish List in our last issue of *goodwords*:

- Melissa Tabbarah – case of Kleenex
- Lucie Van der Veer – small refrigerator
- Computer Goo Roos, Inc. – brand new fully loaded computer and four 17” monitors were given to us in memory of Vilma Ramicone

Still Wishing...

- Round conference table for six
- Brochure and display racks for our growing library
- LCD projector for PowerPoint presentations
- Shelving unit for office supplies in our storage room

Comments? Suggestions? Send us an e-mail at support@goodgriefcenter.com or visit our website at www.goodgriefcenter.com 412.461.1776

message from the executive director

Dear Friends,

This summer my family and I traveled far away from the Good Grief Center and Pittsburgh to a very special destination in Kenya called Hekima Place. Thirty-four girls now call this place home since their parents have all died from AIDS. Each girl is experiencing grief in a way we as Americans cannot even fathom, yet they support and care for each other beautifully.

The lead article in this issue of *goodwords* is about taking care of ourselves. We were fortunate enough to witness that at Hekima Place in a very pure and simple way. These girls have all lost so much but by living in this nurturing environment have gained more than most of us will ever know. They have learned not only to take care of themselves but to care for each other as well. In essence they are creating a new family at Hekima Place. The "Mums" do an amazing job of creating a safe, caring, fun environment. This is a family that works hard at supporting one another and joining forces to have happy, full lives. The girls go to school all day and, once they arrive "home", they wash clothes, help prepare meals, clean up, do several hours of homework and finally collapse into bed. During our time there, we happily assisted with all of this.

The girls talk openly about their family members who have died. Many have lost siblings, aunts, uncles and friends as well as their parents. The difference I noticed from our culture is that when they are thinking of the person(s) who died or are feeling especially sad, they talk freely about it. It may be to one of the other girls, the Mums, or even a visitor like myself. Not only do they share their feelings, but more importantly, there is someone there to listen to them.



We often hear from clients that they don't feel they can talk about their grief because people aren't comfortable with their raw emotions or just don't want to hear about it. Sharing the pain is part of the process of lessening it. Allowing someone you know who is grieving a chance to talk openly about their pain is a gift. People often struggle not knowing how to help; listening truly is a way to help in a simple, yet thoughtful way.



The girls at Hekima Place fill their days with lots of hard work but as a group they make it fun too. It is so important and essential that they have fun, and we shared in that part as well. We played football, performed magic tricks, sang and danced with the girls and also built a swing set for them. They loved it and will have hours of fun on it long after we are gone. Needless to say, the incredible memories created at Hekima Place will stay with us for a lifetime.

This unique trip provided us with the opportunity to discover how 34 young girls deeply affected by grief are starting a new life with a new family. They are helping each other heal from the pain and sorrow each one has experienced at a very early age. Everyone, no matter what age, needs someone to share their pain, their story, their life. Thanks for letting me share mine.

Please...take care,

Lulu



It's Our 5th Anniversary Celebration and You're Invited to Put Yourself in the Picture!



Join Andy Warhol, Marilyn Monroe & Charlie Chaplin for a fabulous party.

Enjoy the fusion flavors of big Catering and beverages from Penn Brewery, Dreadnought Wines and Daily's Cocktails.

Toast Honoree Martha Perry with specially concocted Martha-tinis.

Groove with Dr. Vinnie Vegas.

Bid on both celebrity decorated picture frames and photography by Martha Rial, George Lange to name a few.

When Thursday
September 21, 2006
6:00pm - 9:00pm

Where Andy Warhol Museum
1117 Sandusky Street
North Side

Free parking located at the Warhol Lot on Sandusky Street

Silent Auction Donald Trump's 24K Skyline

Chip Ganassi's Speed Racer

Governor Ed Rendell's Oh Pennsylvania

...and many more

Dress Anything goes at the Warhol

R.S.V.P. September 15, 2006

For tickets or to bid online go to www.goodgriefcenter.com or call 412.461.1776

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