



Celebrate life this spring

(MS) — Spring is here and the warm weather ushers in many new moments for being with friends and family, including Memorial Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and graduation parties.

Although spring can be a festive time, there are many who may not be able to appreciate it to the fullest because they are reflecting on loved ones who are no longer around to celebrate.

"In general, grief can manifest itself physically, emotionally, psychologically, or all three. For example, physically a person might cry, while psychologically a person might begin suffering silently by feeling depressed," said Lulu Orr, executive director of The Good Grief Center, a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit bereavement center aimed at helping people cope with grief.

If a relative or friend is grieving the loss of a loved one, be it a recent death or not, you can take several steps to make that person's life easier:

- **Spend more time with the person and include them in group get-togethers.** Close friends or relatives who have also experienced a loss will relate better to someone who is in need of a little extra sympathy and support.

Surround yourself with the people who are the most supportive — they may be different from the ones you have depended on in the past.

The warm-weather season can be a great time to spend more time with friends and it can be as simple as enjoying the great outdoors by planting a tree, vegetables or flowers. Tending a garden supports well-being with physical activity, fresh air, and warm sunshine.

- **Practice patience.** Everyone deals with grief in his or her own way. There is no specific timetable for grieving.

If you're concerned about a friend or relative, realize the grieving process is personal and different for everyone, and allow them some space while still being there for them when they need you.

- **Show support in other ways.** You don't need to see a person everyday to show you both sympathize with their grief and support them in their process. In order to facilitate this, The Good Grief Center developed the Care Package.

"People who have received the Care Package describe how reassuring and uplifting it is," says Dr. Edward J. Donnelly, M.D. "Because of the comfort I've seen it provide, I recently sent one to a colleague."

Designed to help people express their sympathy and support for friends or relatives who have lost a loved one, the Care Package contains a host of materials to help an individual work through loss in unique ways and deal with their grief in a healthy, effective manner.

In addition to a journal, it also contains a CD with carefully chosen tracks of guided meditations and comforting music.

Each set also includes Quiet Moment Cards, which offer helpful quotations and suggestions on dealing with grief.

One side of each card contains a quote from a well-known person; the flip side contains a quote from individuals who have used the Good Grief Center.

Following that are suggestions to help individuals work through some of the pain and confusion that often accompanies grief.

Customers also have the option of adding a blooming orchid grown by the Manchester Bidwell Corporation, another community-based nonprofit organization.

The orchid and all of the contents of the care package last far longer than traditional cut flower arrangements and also offer much needed guidance and support.

Despite its relatively recent inception, the feedback the care package has already received has been very positive — illustrated by the number of recipients who now choose it as their way of supporting others. In addition, many human resource departments are sending the Care Package to employees who have lost a loved one.

It is a welcome alternative to flowers and food baskets, and an answer to those questioning, "what can I do to help?"

- **Open up.** Many people dealing with grief find that when others talk about their feelings, it's easier for them to open up as well. Be it through support groups or just talking through feelings during one-on-one time with a friend or relative, oftentimes getting certain things off your chest is a great way to facilitate the healing process.

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