

H.O.P.E.

Sent to you by

BROWN-PENNINGTON-ATKINS

306 W. Home Ave.
Hartsville, SC 29550
843-332-6531
www.bpafuneralhome.com

OCTOBER 2005

H.O.P.E.

Helping Overcome and Provide Encouragement

Dear friends,

Whenever we experience a loss or tragedy of any kind, there is always one option open to us: *We can choose how we respond to what has happened.*

For example:

✓ **YOU CAN** choose to overcome, rather than to succumb.
✓ **YOU CAN** choose to be a triumphant survivor, rather than adopting the posture of a victim.
✓ **YOU CAN** choose to push beyond what you're normally capable of, rather than sitting back



wallowing in despair.

✓ **YOU CAN** choose to persist, pursue, persevere; instead of giving up and quitting.

✓ **YOU CAN** choose to reach out, rather than pull in and withdraw from others who can offer support and friendship.

✓ **YOU CAN** visualize a positive outcome, rather than anticipate the worst.

✓ **YOU CAN** celebrate what you have left, rather than only mourn what you have lost.

✓ **YOU CAN** shape a new future, while honoring the past.

✓ **YOU CAN** work to create something positive out of something tragic.

✓ **YOU CAN** seek out support from others who have suffered in similar ways, rather than going it alone.

✓ **YOU CAN** exercise your power, instead of being paralyzed by weakness.

✓ **YOU CAN** cultivate inner peace and not be wracked by outer anxiety and frustration.

✓ **YOU CAN** choose to ask fewer questions which begin with *why*, as in "*Why me?*," and ask better questions beginning with *what*, as in "*What can I do to rebuild my life?*"

✓ **YOU CAN** avoid people who don't know how to help or who are even hurtful, and move toward people who know how to listen, how to care and how to heal.

No matter how great the challenge you face, no matter how painful your loss, no matter how deep your hurt, choose your response carefully. Keep in mind these powerful truths.



"If you think you can, you can. If you think you can't, you're right."

– Mary Kay Ash

GRIEF PERSPECTIVE FROM C. S. LEWIS

Many people know and love the writings of C. S. Lewis, author of the Narnia stories as well as several religious books.



When his wife died, Lewis grieved and then wrote about it in his book, *A Grief Observed*. Here is some of his experiences to ponder.

"No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing.

"At other times it feels like being mildly drunk, or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says. Or perhaps, hard to want to take it in. It is so uninteresting. Yet I want the others to be about me. I dread the moments when the house is empty. If only they would talk to one another and not to me..."

Worth Thinking About...

Grief is an intense form of sadness related to the death or ending of something. It is very important to allow ourselves to grieve fully and not to cut this process short. It can sometimes last a long time, or recur periodically for a very long time. Accept it and give yourself as much support as you need whenever grief comes up. It is a paradox that we cannot truly release or end anything unless we grieve for it. The tears move through us, wash us clean, and create the space for something new. - Shakti Gawain, from her book, *Reflections in the Light*.

GRIEF MISCONCEPTIONS

Sadly, many people are emotionally handicapped because they and many of their family and friends operate under a variety of grief myths. It is important to dispel those ideas and replace them with solid, accurate information so that grievers can acknowledge, accept, adapt and adjust to their loss. Here are some common grief misconceptions.

MISCONCEPTION: "Grieving is a display of personal weakness or lack of discipline."

REALITY: The pain of grief is the price we pay for caring and loving another person. When someone we love dies, we feel pain and that pain is called grief. Grieving is a sign of love not a sign of weakness or lack of personal discipline. "It is impossible to live without experiencing grief," writes Nancy O'Connor, PhD., in her book *Letting Go With Love: The Grieving Process*. "The process of grieving is the way that we release the old ways of thinking and being, and make room for the new ones. It is the way we heal after a loss."



complete grief adjustment can take as long as five years. Those who wish to support a griever need to be patient. The bereaved are never helped when they are told, "You ought to be over this by now." Friends and other supporters need to remember grief takes as long as it takes.

MISCONCEPTION: "Time Heals."

REALITY: There is some truth that the mere passing of time can ease memories of the initial pain. The greater truth is that grief work done during the time of grieving is what results in healing. Those who have had the happy experience of knowing that "time heals" are those who have honestly faced their loss, dealt with their feelings, sought information about grief, asked for guidance, taken the necessary steps to create a new way of living. These are the people who have redeemed the time doing grief work by paying attention to the process as it impacts their living, and they have asked the all important question: "What do I do now and how can I re-shape my future?"

MISCONCEPTION: "Tears are a sign of emotional instability."

REALITY: Crying is a perfectly normal response when grieving. Shedding of tears provides physical relief for emotional pressure. No one who is grieving should ever hear the command "Don't cry." Rather, when a griever is weeping, the best course of action for a supportive friend is to remain silent or cry with the person. Writer Alfred Austin had it right when he wrote: "Tears are summer showers to the soul."

MISCONCEPTION: "You can easily put this behind you and get on with life."

REALITY: To believe that a tragic event can simply be set aside is highly unrealistic and unreasonable. Grief recovery is hard. It takes a long time to adapt and adjust, much longer than most people think. While every griever is different, the grief recovery range is generally between three and five years. This, of course, does not mean that a griever will hurt as intensely in the fifth year as in the first, but that a

MISCONCEPTION: "Grievers don't want to talk about their loss."

REALITY: That's probably all they want to talk about. They want others to bring the subject up and to mention their deceased loved one's name. One woman, whose child died, reminds others: "Parents who have lost children fear their child will be forgotten. Our children's birth and death days are lonely and sad for us. When our friends or family contact us on these days and let us know they remember, it warms our hearts. Often people hesitate to mention our child's name, fearing it will bring up sad thoughts and feelings. Yet, they can't 'remind' us about our children, because we have not forgotten them."