

H.O.P.E.

Sent to you by

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Helping Overcome and Provide Encouragement



Dear friends,

We understand that grief is a journey. As you begin to heal from your recent loss, we would like to offer you continued support and encouragement.

As a result, we are sending you our H.O.P.E. (Helping Overcome and Provide Encouragement) newsletter. The newsletter is written by ordained minister and grief educator Victor Parachin. He is the author of numerous books on grief including: *Grief Relief* (Chalice Press, 1994); *The Lord Is My Shepherd: A Psalm For The Grieving* (Liguori Triumph Books, 1994) and *Healing Grief* (Chalice Press, 2000).

Rev. Parachin has a conversational and personal writing style that we believe can help you through the grief process. Elsewhere in this first issue, Rev. Parachin highlights some key information to keep in mind as you begin to deal with your grief. Future issues will continue to offer constructive and inspirational insight as you progress through your journey.

We were honored to serve your family at your time of need. If you have any questions about the newsletter or other available grief support services, please don't hesitate to contact us.

GRIEVING IS A NATURAL AND NECESSARY

response to a significant change or loss in our lives.

Thus, grief is a healthy, human response to many situations such as:

- the death of a loved one
- miscarriage
- separation or divorce
- injury or disability
- loss of a pet
- demise of a job
- children leaving home
- giving up on a dream
- disappointment in a child

Of course, the greatest loss we experience takes place when a loved one dies. Try to keep in mind that although bereavement is a deeply painful experience that pain will subside. *Grieving is healthy and human. We are created to recover from loss and change.*

Worth Thinking About

Wife's sudden death leaves man struggling

"After more than 49 years of a wonderful and happy marriage, my wife became ill and died within five days," explained a grieving husband to advice columnist 'Dear Abby'. "I was overcome with grief. It has been four months, and I am still depressed and heartbroken. How long will it take for the heartache to go away? . . . Do you think it would be better to sell my home that we lived in 49 years with all the memories - or wait a while?" he asked.

Abigail Van Buren offered three pieces of wisdom.

First, she reminded the man "there is no set timetable for grieving the death of a loved one."

Secondly, she advised him to get involved with a grief support group as soon as possible. "You can be referred to one by your clergy person or the hospital where your wife died."

Finally, she wrote: "Do nothing in haste. Make no important decision, such as what to do with your house, for one year. By then, you will be thinking more clearly and will be able to decide what is most practical for you."

Ten Ways to Triumph Over Grief

1. Find others like you. Only those who have lost a loved one can truly



understand what you are going through. Find them. Join a grief support group.

2. Take care of yourself. The best antidepressants don't come out of a plastic container. They come in the form of healthy nutrition, adequate rest and exercise. Eat balanced



meals, get the right amount of rest your body needs, and engage in a physically demanding exercise regimen.

3. Honor your feelings, all of them. Grief brings a flood of feelings, some of them can be uncomfortable: anger, guilt, regret, sadness, depression, despair. Simply honor your feelings and let the emotions flow. Don't judge them. Don't decide they should or shouldn't be there. Just be with them. They will pass, and your emotional state will even out.

4. Remain active. If you were working, return to your job. Remain involved in your church, community organizations or civic associations. Many grievers report that remaining active was therapeutic.

5. Know that grief recovery takes time. It usually takes longer than most people expect, usually between three and five years. Be patient with yourself. Your wound will heal gradually.



6. Express your feelings. It's not sufficient to merely be aware of what you are experiencing. Find a few supportive friends who will listen and let you express your feelings in their company. This will relieve some of your loneliness as well as help put your feelings into perspective.

7. Begin to forge new paths for yourself. Your life has changed and will continue to do so. Put shape to those changes by forging new paths. This may be a time to learn new skills, return to school or take additional training.



8. Postpone making major decisions. The death of a loved one forces making some unexpected decisions. However, anything major - the selling of all or part of an estate, a geographical move, a job change - should be avoided during the first year if possible.

9. Be brave enough to accept help. Friends will welcome a chance to provide a listening ear, run an errand or join you in an outing. Helping you will make them feel less helpless. Also, allowing others to help is your way of saying "No" to loneliness.



10. Remember the serenity prayer. Written by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, this prayer contains great truth: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know one from the other." Call these words to mind when in need of their wisdom.



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For Further Reflection...

It has been said that each of us faces two choices in life. We can have a broken heart, or we can have a shriveled heart. If you give yourself to anyone - a child, a spouse, a friend, a community - then sooner or later, your heart will break.

There's only one way to avoid a broken heart. That is to be careful never to give your heart away to anyone - not a child, a spouse, a friend, a community, or even an animal. Instead, store your heart away in some safe place, wrapped in small

pleasures. But if you choose that, then something worse than a broken heart will happen. Your heart will shrivel. It will not be broken, but it will become dried up, desiccated, empty of love.

Better that a heart be broken, so that love flows from it like rain moistening dry ground, than that a heart become shriveled and dry, with nothing to offer.

- Charles Hoffacker in *A Matter of Life and Death*.

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