

Spring



# Reflections

## Practicing Good Self Care

By Jeanne Shaffer

Grieving is a prolonged process that impacts every aspect of our being. Think of what an everyday headache can do to you:

- You feel a pounding in your head that keeps you from concentrating
- Your eyes can become extra sensitive
- You may feel nauseated
- Some people experience dizziness
- You may become short-tempered
- Many want to withdraw from those around them
- Most experience a lack of energy and drive



If you have a heartache instead of a headache, you're also going to hurt in many different ways.

The consequences of not taking care of ourselves in grief can be devastating. Over time, our bodies and our spirits may have difficulty coping with the ongoing stress that grieving often brings. Grievers need to learn how to take care of and nurture themselves so that the grieving process can become a time of healing and growth.

The pain and stress that accompanies grief is actually beneficial. Grief lecturer Thomas Strawser writes, "It signals to us that something is wrong and needs to be addressed. What would happen if we broke an arm and it didn't hurt? Like physical pain, emotional pain is a symptom of something gone awry, of an emotional wound that needs to be tended to." Dr. Alan Wolfelt, Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado, further explains, "Practicing good self-care doesn't mean we are feeling sorry for ourselves, being selfish or being self-indulgent. It means we are creating conditions that will allow us to integrate the death of someone we loved into our heart and soul."

Self-nurturing begins with making a commitment to care for ourselves. We are the only ones who can do this. No one else will do it for us. Then when we are feeling down or lonely, tired or exhausted, we can remind ourselves that we have *promised* to take good care of ourselves.

When we promise to take good care of ourselves we are acknowledging four important truths:

- ♥ Our lives are important! – we deserve to live!
- ♥ There is so much more for us to discover and learn!
- ♥ We are not closer to our loved one when we hurt.
- ♥ We have much to give to others as well as to ourselves!

Taking care of our physical self begins with recognizing our body's symptoms of stress. Grievers are often surprised by how much their bodies respond to their loss. In most instances, the physical symptoms described on the following page are normal and temporary. However, it is recommended that a general check-up be scheduled with the family physician to avoid overlooking one of the body's natural warning signs of physical illness.

# Recognizing Your Body's Reactions to Stress

## Common Physical Reactions

Difficulty sleeping  
Fatigue  
Headaches  
Dizziness  
Sensitivity to noise  
Muscle aches and pains  
Heart palpitations  
Difficulty breathing  
Shortness of breath  
Tightness in your throat or chest  
Back and or neck pain  
Loss or increase in appetite  
Nausea or queasiness  
Digestive problems  
Weight loss or gain  
Generalized tension  
Weakened immune system

## Common Emotional Reactions

Depression  
Apathy  
Anxiety  
Panic  
Anger  
Restlessness  
Frustration  
Irritability

## Common Mental Reactions

Forgetfulness  
Difficulty concentrating  
Preoccupation with a particular fear  
Difficulty completing tasks  
Loss of confidence  
Lower self-esteem



# A Book Review

By Doris TenElshof

## When Will I Stop Hurting?

By June Cerza Kolf

The author of this book was working with Hospice and well acquainted with helping others face death and loss until her husband lost his battle with bladder cancer and she found herself having to “walk the walk.” All of the words she once shared with others were now taking on new meaning for her. She found she was feeling bruised. She had to find her way to a sense of comfort and strength. In writing this book she chooses to answer the question of when the hurting will stop by addressing The Wound, The Flood and The Rainbow.

We want to be able to understand grief! Even though each person deals with sorrow in his or her own way, there are areas that are the same.

Losing someone to death is a mortal wound. We did not ask for it, we do not want it and most of all we do not understand it. The wound is there because we were privileged to have loved someone. It seems ironic, but without having loved, there would be no grief. The wound carries with it many

side effects, some physical and others emotional and all of them are symptoms of our profound grief.

Grief is a heavy load and we need to remember that any burden is easier to bear when we share it with a friend. For those who believe in God, it is good to know that He will help us carry the load . . . but we need to remember to not hold on to it so tightly.

During the flood of our grief we begin to deal with the actual stages of grief – the shock, the sighing, the crying, the anger, the depression; it can be overwhelming. The truth is, grief is going to hurt whether or not we face it. We can delay or repress it but it is not going to disappear. The author maintains that if we face it, we will eventually feel better.

After the flood comes the rainbow. The rainbow is not only a promise but a challenge to begin life anew. We will be able to appreciate the rainbow if we let go, experience the pain, accept the truth and finally reinvest in life and reach out. In doing these things we will recognize that our lives may not ever be as they once were, but we can experience love, peace and happiness.

### Elements of Healing

- ❖ Finding the support you need from both inside and outside your family.
- ❖ Sharing the pain of your darkness.
- ❖ Learning from the experiences of others.
- ❖ Feeling free to protest the “why” of death.
- ❖ Confronting guilt by realizing you did the best you could.
- ❖ Allowing yourself to laugh and to cry.
- ❖ Having the courage to remember.
- ❖ Taking the initiative to make things happen for yourself.
- ❖ Reaching out and helping others.
- ❖ Saying “Good-bye” to your loved one.



## Something To Think About

Moving on after losing a loved one is not easy. We hold tightly to memories of the past and prefer not to project into the future. We do not want to believe that new spaces can be created and filled with joy.

Visualize a trapeze swing. We are swinging on the bar, hanging on for dear life. Ahead we see the next bar and it is swinging toward us. It is empty, but we know it has our name on it. We also know that sooner or later we need to hurtle across space and grab that new bar. Will we be fearful? Of course! But we need to do it . . .it is part of moving on.

It is the void between the two bars that is scary, but that is the time of growth . . . of growing through the fear and pain of being out of control and moving on to the possibilities ahead.

I think this is what faith is all about—we reach out, we grab on and we soar!

By Doris TenElshof



You don't heal from the loss of a loved one  
because time passes;  
you heal because of what you do  
with the time.

By Carol Crandall

### Grief Is Not

Grief is not a mountain to be climbed,  
with the strong reaching the  
summit long before the weak.

Grief is not an athletic event,  
with stopwatches timing our  
progress.

Grief is a walk through loss and pain  
with no competition and no time  
trials.

### *The Bud*

*And the day came*

*When the risk*

*To remain*

*Tight in a bud*

*Was more painful*

*Than the risk*

*It took*

*To blossom.*

Author Unknown

### **COOK FUNERAL & CREMATION SERVICES**

4235 Prairie St. SW  
Grandville, MI 49418  
616-534-7619