BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

Going through grief rarely ever happens without challenges or difficult emotions. A major challenge you may feel over the next few months is the lack of support from people around you as they return to their jobs and families. This additional loss of your support system may leave you feeling lost and alone.

There may be times when you’re having a great deal of pain and yet some people expect you to “move on.” Life may not feel normal to you anymore. It may be hard to go back to your old routine because life can never be the same without your loved one. However, this doesn’t mean that it will never feel okay, or even good, again.

You are not alone. We know this process is a hard one that takes lots of time and often lots of tears. We urge you to reach out to us and to family and friends so that you feel supported as you begin this journey through grief.

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU...

The mission of the BJC Hospice bereavement program is to provide grief services to people of all ages who have been affected by the death of a loved one. We strive to build a more compassionate and connected community, facilitate mourning, and foster resilience by providing grief awareness, education, support, resources and hope.

Please contact us for support. We can...
- talk on the phone or meet in person
- provide information about support groups and therapists
- send reading material about grief and loss
- discuss any questions or concerns
- provide information on grief camps and retreats

If you need additional support, you could:
- Contact your BJC Hospice bereavement specialist
- Find a support group or therapist (contact us for help finding either of these)
- Search for grief websites to provide information or online support
- Attend a memorial service (contact us for help finding one)
- Contact the clergy/leaders at your place of worship

Keep in mind that most people really want to help. Don’t be afraid to ask for help or accept support when you need it.
YOUR JOURNEY IS UNIQUE

- Even though we all feel grief and loss, your grief is unique to you. This is because of:
  - your relationship with the person who died
  - your cultural and religious background
  - the circumstances surrounding the death
  - your support systems

- Your journey through grief will be unique and sometimes unpredictable. Since you will not always be able to plan your feelings and reactions, you may want to try taking a “one-day-at-a-time” or “one-step-at-a-time” approach. This will let you grieve at your own pace.

REACH OUT TO SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Reaching out to others and accepting support are often hard things to do. They can be especially hard when you hurt so much. An important thing you can do at this time is to find a support system.

- Share your grief outwardly; ignoring your grief won’t make it go away.
- Find friends and relatives who care and will listen to you without judging.
- Reach out to your bereavement specialist at BJC Hospice for support and encouragement.

Expect feelings that affect your body, mind, and spirit

Experiencing a loss may affect your total being. You may feel mixed emotions. As strange as it might seem, most of the time your emotions are normal and healthy. For example:

- Don’t be surprised if you feel sudden or unexpected surges of grief. These grief attacks can upset or overwhelm you. Keep in mind they are a normal response to the death of your loved one. It can be helpful to find someone who will be supportive and allow you to talk about all of your feelings.
- Many people feel dazed or numb early on in their grief experience after a loved one dies. This feeling protects you from the reality of the death. It is common to go back and forth between feeling numb and experiencing the reality of the death.
- Your feelings of loss and sadness may leave you feeling very tired or without energy. These feelings may affect how well you think or make decisions, or it can just slow you down. Respect what your body and mind are telling you.

Take care of yourself. Get enough rest. Eat balanced meals. If you can, lighten your schedule as much as possible. Taking care of yourself is very important right now.

Seek out people who will walk with you, not in front of or behind you in your journey through grief.
EMBRACE YOUR SEARCH FOR MEANING

Many people often search for meaning after the death of a loved one as part of their healing process. This often includes asking questions such as: “Why did he die?”, “Why this way?”, or “Why now?” Some questions like these have answers but some do not. Just asking these questions can help you heal even if you are not able to find the answers. Seek out supportive people who will listen to your questions and concerns as you search for meaning.

If faith is part of your life, find ways to express it that are meaningful to you. Find ways to be around others who understand and support your religious and spiritual beliefs. You may even feel angry at God or a higher power because of the death of your loved one. Find someone to talk with who won’t be critical of your feelings. Find people who will accept where you are in your grief process.

HONORING YOUR LOVED ONE IS IMPORTANT

A memorial service or funeral gives you a chance to remember your loved one and share your grief with others. Even after the service, you can continue to do things to honor your loved one. Some of these include burning a candle or reading a poem to remember that special person on important days. This can be done in private or with others so you can share your grief experience.

BJC Hospice offers annual memorial services.

TREASURE YOUR MEMORIES AND MOVE TOWARD HEALING

Memories are some of the greatest treasures you have after a loved one dies. Whether they make you laugh or cry, they are an ongoing part of the relationship you had with someone who was special to you. Try to find friends and family who will listen to your memories and share their memories with you.

- Your grief may feel more confusing and overwhelming if you try to avoid it. It is often easier to heal when you openly express your feelings of grief.
- Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient with yourself.
- There is hope. Although your life will never be the same without your loved one, most people find meaning and joy in their lives again.

“The experience of grief is powerful. So, too, is your ability to help yourself heal. In doing the work of grieving, you are moved toward a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in your life.” ~ Alan Wolfelt

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SUPPORT THAT SURROUNDS

BJC Hospice offers the following programs at no cost to the community.

Daybreak — A one-day grief retreat for couples who have lost a child.

Labyrinth — A one-day grief retreat for teens who have experienced the death of a family member or friend.

Portals and Threshold — Grief support groups for spouse and partner loss.

Stepping Stones Camp — A weekend camp held annually in August for children ages 6-12 who have experienced the death of a family member or friend.

Weavings — A weekend retreat held annually in the fall for mothers who have experienced the death of a child.

Wings on Wheels (W.O.W.) — A mobile expressive and music therapy program to support individuals, families, and groups impacted by illness and loss.

Lumina — A program to help people share their life stories and create legacy projects for loved ones.

For more information, please call 314-953-1676 or email griefsupport@bjc.org.

We want to provide you with EXCELLENT support and service. Please contact us if you would like a call or visit.