HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS...

There may be times you feel you are moving forward, but then something triggers your grief. Do not lose hope that you will continue to heal. Here are some realistic expectations to keep in mind:

• Your grief will take longer and require more energy than you and most people think it will.
• Your grief will depend on your relationship with your loved one and what happened in the weeks and moments leading up to his or her death.
• Your loss may bring back old issues, feelings, or conflicts from the past.
• You may feel a loss of identity.
• You may feel and act differently in social situations.
• Some people may react to you in a way that is not appropriate.
• You may find that some dates or milestones will affect you emotionally.
• Your grief will change and develop over time.

Adapted from “How To Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies” by Theresa Rando, Ph.D.

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

The Coping Corner

MAKE A BASKET OF GRATITUDE

Sometimes when people are grieving it helps to step back and remember what you are grateful for in your life, even if you can only think of one or two things right now.

Find a container. It doesn’t have to be a basket. It can be a box, bag, can, or folder. Cut up strips of paper and write notes about things you are thankful for on each one.

You could ask your family and friends to do the same, and add them to your basket.

Keep it in a special place so you can pick a strip of paper and read it when you are feeling down.
SUGGESTIONS FOR SELF CARE

Remembering to take care of yourself when you are grieving is important because it can help you cope with your reactions to grief and continue to heal. Sometimes it can be difficult to think of ways to care for yourself. On these pages you will find a variety of suggestions. Use the ones you are drawn to on the list and maybe these will help you think of your own ideas as well.

Live in the moment

- People who are constantly looking back may experience some depression.
- People who are always looking forward may experience anxiety.
- Try to live in the moment and appreciate today.

Spend time with loved ones

- Dust off those board games and play one together.
- Watch a movie.
- Take a trip to a special store or a favorite park.

Hugs can help!

- Ask for a back rub, foot rub, or a hug.
- Give somebody else a back rub, foot rub, or hug.

Read a book

- It might make you smile or take you to an exciting place.

Talk about your day

- Tell someone about something good and something difficult/bad from your day.
- Ask someone about the good and bad parts of their day.

Practice the “I am calm” exercise

Created by: Sonya Choquette

- Take in a deep breath, and say quietly to yourself, “I am ...” as you inhale, and “... calm” as you exhale.
- Allow the feeling of “calm” to echo throughout your entire body and wash away the stress.

Take a day off from electronics

- Turn off your computer, television, radio, iPad/iPhone, video games, email, and telephone
- Take time to talk and enjoy the company of others away from modern technology.

Say the “Loving Kindness Blessing”

- Say it for yourself first and then for your friends/family.
- Encourage them to do the same.
- May ________ be safe and protected and free from all inner and outer harm.
- May ________ be happy and content.
- May ________ be healthy and whole to whatever degree possible.
- May ________ experience joy, ease, and the lightness of well-being.

Adapted from a Buddhist meditation

Be mindful

- Take a moment to focus on your breath, hear your heartbeat, and clear your mind.
Grief can be complicated

Grief can make people wonder how long the hurt will last or they may believe that their feelings of grief should be over in six months or a year. Some may feel pressure from others to “get over it and move on.” However, there is not a typical timeline or set of predictable stages for grief. Other stressors and life changes such as loss of a home, divorce, caring for children or other family members, substance abuse, or your own physical illness or injury can make it even more challenging to work through grief and take care of yourself. We encourage you to be patient with yourself and take the time you need to fully grieve. Please consider taking even a few minutes a day to reach out to your support system and try different coping or self-care tools such as the ones listed in our HEAL mailings. Contact BJC Hospice if you need more ideas or support.

Please contact your primary care doctor, mental health practitioner or the BJC Hospice bereavement team if …

• You are still feeling sad on most days
• You are having a hard time completing daily tasks
• You feel your grief is getting worse
• You are having thoughts of suicide (in case of crisis, call the Suicide Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255)

These professionals can discuss counseling, self-care tools, medications and supplements, counseling, and other options with you to help figure out what works for you and helps you move towards healing.

Food and family

• Cook a special meal together and sit down to eat as a family.

Photo contest

• Have a contest to see who can find the funniest photo of your loved one.
• Share memories about all the photos you find.

Sharing circle

• When friends or family gather, ask everyone to sit in a circle. Take turns saying one or two things you have appreciated about each person in the circle in the past week.

Taking control and letting go

• Draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper.
• Think of your to-do list and all the things that may be causing you stress.
• On the left side of the paper, list what you can control.
• On the right side, write down what you cannot control.
• Try to let go of things on the right that you cannot control, and pick out one or two from the left that you want to work on.

“Healing takes courage, and we all have courage, even if we have to dig a little to find it.” - Tori Amos
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**