

Pathways Through Grief



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For You And Those
You Love.*

Pathways Through Grief

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✦ The loss of a loved one is the most difficult thing anyone faces in their life. Learning how to regain your life after such a devastating loss involves lessons that are both painful and enlightening—and are often recognized only after you have moved on from a point of realization.

✦ Sometimes a loss is so deep and confounding that there doesn't seem to be room for thought or feeling in your world. Detachment from your surroundings, family, and friends is a common experience after the loss of a loved one. The reality of your loss may be accepted on a certain level of awareness, but the possible reactions to that reality are so many, and so intense, that denial often becomes the safest course of action.

Emotions Denial is a very natural reaction to deep loss, and it takes as many different forms as there are different people.

✦ We use the strength of denial's delusion to protect ourselves from overwhelming life events. We use this false peace to give ourselves time to absorb what has happened and attempt to maintain control over our reactions. Like any coping process, denial is perfectly suited to help us—for a time. Denial that becomes absolute

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rejection of reality means that the grieving person is in peril and needs the support of others to move forward on their pathway through grief.

❖ *A*ny severe life shock will produce emotional and mental reactions. These reactions may happen a few times, or they may re-visit the grieving person repeatedly. There is no way to know what reactions you will encounter, in yourself and in others who are also grieving. There is no certain timetable for grief. Each person responds differently and regains their life structure only within the timeframe that suits their ability to absorb the loss and move forward with their life.

❖ *F*ear is the most common emotion tied to the loss of a loved one. The changes being faced often appear enormous and overwhelming. Doubt seems to cling to every thought, breeding guilt, indecision, and anxiety. Fear is natural and helps us to define the extent of our loss. Fear that lingers stifles the chance for healing and signals the grieving persons need for support from others.

❖ *S*ometimes, a grieving person encounters fear many months, or even years, after the loved one was lost. This is normal, because, as time passes, situations are going to be encountered that used to be taken care of by the loved one we lost. There is no way to know when such situations will be encountered, or how you will react to them. The process of integrating your loss into your life is as intricate as your shared life was with your loved one.

❖ *A*nger is a grief reaction that every person experiences. Often it surfaces without

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warning, triggered by events or the actions of others. Anger is a necessary emotion, though, and one that brings out our courage and resourcefulness. It demands action, answers, change. It urges us to find a way forward on our pathway through grief, and it protects us from the dangers of isolation and withdrawal.

Anger, like all emotions, will not be denied and will find a way to be expressed—even if it must be in 1,000 little spurts directed at anything disruptive or irritating

❖ The fact is that every person suffering a deep loss is going to feel angry that their loved one is gone. It is important for that anger to be expressed in order to resolve it and allow us to move on in our lives. Many people suffering grief feel anger, yet also feel tremendous guilt for being angry. Anger over the loss of a loved one flies in the face of many traditional beliefs, making it difficult for the grief-stricken person to vent this natural feeling. Anger, like all emotions, will not be denied and will find a way to be expressed—even if it must be in 1,000 little spurts directed at anything disruptive or irritating.

❖ A difficult step in grieving is the very private step of releasing the anger created by the loss of your loved one. Great relief can be found in taking this step—relief from emotional pain and from an exhausting series of anger reactions—and for many, the calm after anger allows the first healing sleep.

❖ The step to release anger can be taken alone, in a private space, or with someone intimately supportive to you.

❖ As with any emotion, if anger does not dissipate and begins to affect all behaviors, then it is time to seek the help and support of others to bring your life into balance.

Acceptance As the reality of the loss of a loved one is more deeply absorbed, we move closer to true acceptance of our loss. Acceptance is often a point of realization where we stop on our pathway through grief, and look back at the shared life we must now leave behind. The pain of loss may still be very sharp, but can become more bearable when we truly accept it.

✦ Acceptance is the beginning of healing and of regaining your life.

✦ This takes different amounts of time for different people and cannot be accomplished by simply telling yourself, or another, that the loss of a loved one should be, or must be, accepted. When the grieving person's mind and heart can tolerate it, acceptance will come.

✦ Your life, after the loss of a loved one, will seem to be in continual turmoil and many seek refuge in the familiar routine of the workplace. For many, the return to work is not a choice, but a necessity. Whatever your situation, facing your work world may be more difficult than expected. Grief and the stress of coping with a deep loss affects sleep, appetite and the immune system. Grieving people returning to work usually find difficulty in focusing on tasks, relating to co-workers, making decisions, and maintaining their workload.

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✦ If you must return to the work place shortly after the loss of a loved one, care for yourself as though you were warding off a

cold. Eat regularly, drink plenty of fluids, get as much rest as possible, and keep family and friends close by.

❖ The loss of a loved one is not an event that will go away and the grieving process is not an illness that one hopes to be healed of. However, grief is an experience that can be blended with all your other life experiences to make you wiser, stronger, and more compassionate of others.

Moving Forward

Grief is a process that can isolate us by necessity as we go through whatever steps it takes to regain, and continue with, our lives. The time immediately following the loss of a loved one is usually busy with visits from family and friends, messages of concern and caring, and conversations filled with love and offers of help. Isolation is kept at bay during this time by these regular social contacts.

❖ As time passes, the grieving person may find that visits, messages, and conversations occur less often and the potential for isolation and withdrawal becomes more possible.

❖ In the months following the loss of a loved one, a few very simple actions may go a long way in supporting you as you move along your pathway through grief. To the following possibilities, add your own

Re-discover an old passion.

Something that stirred heart

and soul once, will do so

again, and bring invigorating

interest into your life.

Creativity, sports, inventions,

decorating, gardening,

learning a language — whatever

brings a spark to your world

should be pursued.

ideas and those of family and friends, especially ideas that gave you peace, relief from pain or the ability to smile again.

❖ **P**ut your house in order. Find simple, productive tasks around your home. Tackle each one with whatever energy is available that day. Stop if the effort becomes overwhelming in any way. Do not push—the disorganized closet will be there tomorrow. Approach your tasks playfully. Get dirty, and then sing in the shower.

❖ **M**ake short-range plans. Your future is tomorrow. As time passes, and your grief becomes more deeply absorbed, your future will naturally open up to include the next weekend, week, month, and finally, the next year. Don't ask yourself to look beyond a point in time that seems unavailable to you now.

Forcing long-range plans may trigger grief

reactions in

anticipation

of a future

you cannot now

imagine—causing needless

pain and anxiety.

Re-discover an old passion.

❖ **S**tay socially active. Take your needs to others. Involve others in your life, no matter how small or simple that involvement may seem. Family and friends will delight in being given the opportunity to be supportive and to spend time with you.

❖ **R**e-discover an old passion. Something that stirred heart and soul once, will do so again, and bring invigorating interest into your life. Creativity, sports, inventions, decorating, gardening, learning a language—whatever brings a spark to your world should be pursued. It is important to discover



that grief, though an intense element in our lives after the loss of a loved one is not by nature a restrictive experience. You can experience profound grief, but in the midst of that grief, you can also experience passions that renew.

❖ **C**enter yourself through faith or devotion to a cause or belief. Many people suffering in the grieving process find

peace and solace in their spiritual faith or beliefs. Such commitments can provide a common core of support that can give mental and emotional stability to those who have lost a loved one. Devotion to a cause can become a beneficial extension of the lost loved one. Working as a volunteer with organizations seeking disease cures, bringing about public awareness of hazards or safety issues, or backing protective legislation are a few ways a grieving person can take their loss in a positive direction.

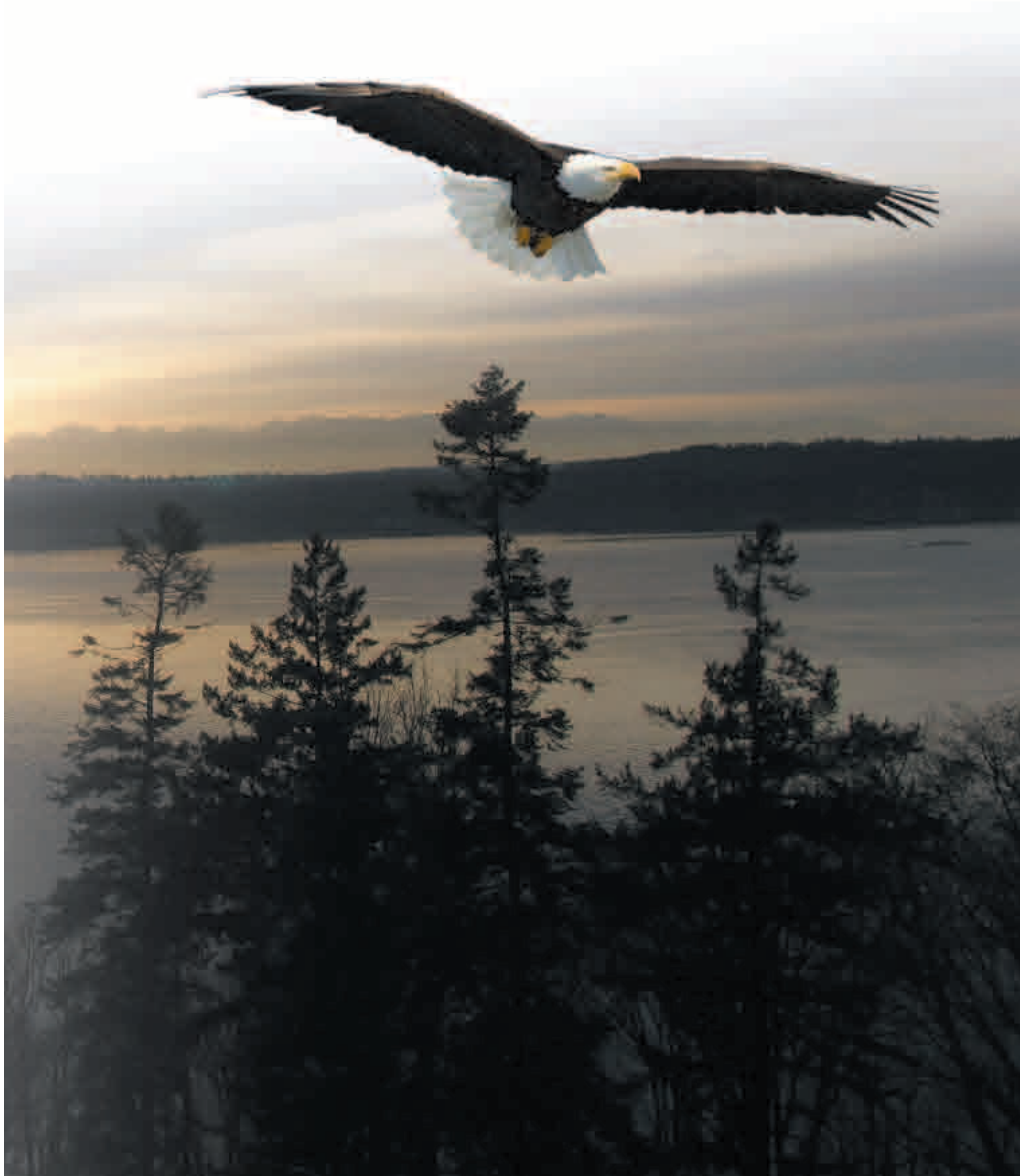
❖ **E**njoy the unconditional love of a pet. Giving love is the greatest healing effort a person suffering from the loss of a loved one can perform. It opens the heart and mind and allows room for acceptance and life renewal. The simple act of hugging a pet and releasing your love to it can do wonders.

❖ **D**on't deny laughter. Through all the moments of sadness, longing, and heartbreak, if something brings the urge to laugh, give yourself a gift—take a deep breath and laugh.

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❖ *Grief is a process. Every person finds their own pathway through, in their own time. Life is regained and renewed. Pain and heartache subdue, as the knowledge of loss becomes a part of us, instead of a devastating shock that overwhelms and confounds.*

❖ The family of Jacobs Funeral Homes would like to invite you to visit our website: www.jacobsfuneralhomes.com and sign up for our free newsletter, which offers grief support for anyone suffering the loss of a loved one.



Notes / Steps To Accomplish:



Funeral Homes & Cremation Services, Inc.

"Celebrating Great Lives"





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