

# HOPE NOTES



Hospice of Charleston  
a Gentiva® company

## Beginning Again—Again

By: J. Chris Adams D. Min.

The attempt to return back to the routines of one's life after facing a significant loss is no little challenge. The fact that we live in this "Grief-Lite" culture that often times does not recognize the need to grieve, and/or is unwilling to give the time to grieve—does not help us in our challenge.

You may hear an employer say, "take all the time you need", but sadly that is not always the reality. Many people go back to work prematurely and find that the workplace is not always conducive to the support of those grieving. Sometimes the loss that we have experienced is not recognized by the company policy, and we feel disenfranchised in our grief. Beginning again after loss is a struggle; however, one that must be faced, even when the needed support seems absent. In a cultural community that encourages grievers to "stay busy" and to "get back" to work as soon as possible—instinctively I believe we know that is wrong.

There is a need to slow down, and take it easy—one day at a time is not just

a cliché, it is a guiding principle for those facing loss. Readjusting after a significant loss is nothing less than "beginning again—again. Our normal has been taken away from us and our new normal is both frightful and foreboding. The words of Joseph Bayly in his "Psalm for Extremity" says what most feel after a loss. *"I cry tears to you Lord, tears because I cannot speak. Words are lost among my fears, pain, sorrows, losses, hurts, but tears you understand, my wordless prayer you hear. Lord wipe away my tears all tears not in a distant day, but now here."*

"Now here" is where we live, and where we hurt, and where we weep, and where we must begin again—again....one day at a time.

**J. Chris Adams D. Min.** Spiritual and Bereavement Services Program Manager, Gentiva Hospice Division

## "Hope In Healing"

Grief Support Group

2nd Thursday of each month  
10:30am-11:30am

Small Grief Group

### 6 Week Grief Support

Grieving is difficult enough alone; journey with others for support and encouragement.

This group will be on six consecutive Monday evenings beginning.

**January 18th 2010**  
**6:00pm—7:30pm**

**Please call Greg Mason**  
**843.529.3100 or email**  
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**for more information.**



## BEREAVEMENT SERVICES CONTACT INFORMATION

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Goldsmith/ Paul Cowley /Bill  
Frank/ Tallmadge Butler  
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**Jasper-** Bill Daniel  
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### Georgia

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**Columbus-** Marquette Rodgers  
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**Jackson** - Terry Robinson  
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### GRIEF TIPS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- Acknowledge, not avoid...the difficult reality that has happened, by your word or presence.
- Serve as a willing "sponge"... and listen to the story of pain over and over, until the storyteller no longer needs to hear it.
- Validate what the grieving are saying... without trying to correct them, without using clichés.
- Accept grieving people where they are...while remembering there is no standard timetable of grief.
- Offer specific ways to help... without using generalizing phrases like, "call if I can be of help."
- Listen to their questions...without giving any of your answers, even though you want to "band-aid" them.
- Show tender care and encouragement...when they are heavy of heart, and don't leave them because they're "not fixed yet."
- Share your memories of their loved on... in stories, pictures, and "I remember when's," so they know you have not forgotten.
- Realize that companionship the grieving...can drain all of your energies to a deep low, unless you meaningfully keep yourself fed.

## A Year Is a Relative Thing

A year is the period of a planet's revolution around the sun; three hundred and sixty five days for the earth, longer for some planets, shorter for others. In the life of a bereaved individual, the time period of a year is a relative thing.

On the one hand, survivors often are amazed that so much time has passed since the death. Four seasons weathered; the holiday periods endured. It seems impossible that they have borne the pain for a full twelve months. On the other hand, it may seem that time has not moved at all. Emotions and memories seem fresh.

The news of the death and the ensuing days of confusion and painful decision making seem like only yesterday. And with this perspective, comes a fear that little recovery has taken place at all.

Are you caught in a similar time warp? Has the passage of time been too quick and too slow? And what is to be done with this first anniversary of the death? If you are approaching this marker in your bereavement, it is time to take stock of where you have been and where you are heading.

The first anniversary is a special day for recognizing the loss. I have no doubt that you have been thinking daily about the loss and the change in your life. But, this day looms larger than most. It brings back the sadness of the death itself with renewed force sustained by a year of experiencing the full import of the loss.

But the day can also be used as a special day for celebrating the life of the deceased. Grieving stems not from the death itself but from the loss of the person. It is the loss of the laughter, the love, and connections past, present, and future.

How can you celebrate the life of your loved one? This is the challenge of the death anniversary. One family I know takes gold balloons to the high school track where their son had competed and lets float the personal message that each had written to him on the balloons. One widow picnics by the lake where she sprinkled her husband's ashes. Another family "celebrates" annually by having dinner together in a new restaurant that the daughter would have enjoyed. Creating a positive ritual that can be either fulfilled alone or shared adds powerful and supportive meaning to the death anniversary.

The death anniversary is also a day for acknowledging the living. This certainly includes you! The last twelve months have been demanding. You have handled your loss in the way you have needed to survive. You deserve to recognize yourself as one who has endured great hardship and to take care of yourself in a way that will ensure your ability to make a new life for yourself.

-by Ellen Zinner, PsyD  
*taken from the Hospice Foundation of America's Newsletter, "Journeys"*

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## The Winter of Our Souls

The sky is gray and the tears of clouds fall more frequently this time of year. Trees stripped of their adorning leaves stand bleak and thin, bending to the cold winds of this day. Waves of shivering foam pound empty beaches while the sun teases us with moments of appearing and then tucks back beneath a quilt of gray. This season is weary for many and the starkness sometimes overbearing. We press against the blowing chill and long for the days of warmth and comfort. We long for times we remember in our heart which have wilted from our presence. We sit within the walls of ourselves wrapped in a comforter of memories wondering if we will ever see the beauty of this life again.

There will be a dawning, maybe not tomorrow or the next day, but there will be an awakening. It will come with a parting of the clouds and a small beacon of warmth will touch your shoulder. It will appear with buds of hope that grace the limbs that wave for you to come see. It will rest on ears with the sounds of life chirping with new breath. Although the season will come of its own, your work will create a fresher hope and a brighter tomorrow.



Should we cultivate the soil of our heart and fertilize bulbs of hope that lay beneath this bareness, We will eventually see the new beginnings that lie before us. Our world will never look the same but it will always offer newness should we choose to look for its arrival.

Greg V. Mason  
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