

# Hope Notes

June 2010



Hospice of Charleston  
a Gentiva® company

## Experiencing Grief As A Family

By: J. Chris Adams D. Min.

Grief is typically not experienced alone but rather in the context of a family unit. The makeup of the family; its structure, closeness, and cultural influences will all have impact on the grieving process. Coming to terms with the loss and making adjustments to all its implications is ultimately fleshed out within the confines of the family unit.

Sharon Hart May Ph.D. Director of The Marriage, Family, and Relationship Institute at La Vie Counseling Center in Pasadena, California has suggests five issues that affect the grieving process within the family context. They are: the timing and type of loss; the nature of the relationship; the family structure; the family connections to social networks; and concurrent losses or life cycle changes.

As you face your loss consider the impact that these factors are having within your family structure, and how these factors influence the approach you and your family employ in coming to terms with the loss and making appropriate adjustments.

The timing and type of loss will greatly impact grief. Was there sufficient time to say goodbye, is there a list of regrets, guilt or unfinished business? These factors provide valuable information as we evaluate the coping strategies of ourselves and other family members.

The nature of the relationship certainly impact the grief process. The death does not change the fact of the relationship; one's mother will always be one's mother, but it does affect how we experience grief.

Family structure is also very significant to the grieving process. The stronger the attachment within the family structure the better equipped one is to face the loss and adapt to the change. Strong attachment within the family, fortifies the members during times of loss.

Concurrent losses or life cycle changes compound every loss. When one loss is placed on top of another loss, the impact is compounded. This is the blessing and the burden of family connections; it opens us up to compounded losses.

Remember that you not only need to support the members of your family, but you need to allow members of your family to support you. Realizing that you are facing this loss with others can be a source of strength. Moreover, when you are aware that every member will approach the loss from their vantage point, and their special connections with the deceased, it will enable you to embrace understanding and patience with one another as you face this loss together.

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

## "Hope in Healing" Grief Support Group

2nd Thursday each month

10:30am—11:30 am

3870 Leeds Ave. Suite 101  
N. Charleston, SC 29405

Please contact Frank Butler at  
843.529.3100 or  
frank.butler@gentiva.com

## *Six-Week Grief Group*

*Beginning July 12*

*3:00—4:30 pm*

*3870 Leeds Ave.  
Suite 101  
N. Charleston, SC 29405*

*Contact: Greg Mason  
at  
843.529.5100  
Or  
greg.mason@gentiva.com*

*Limited openings  
available*

## BEREAVEMENT SERVICES CONTACT INFORMATION

### Alabama

**Huntsville-** Dan Anderson  
256.519.8808

**Florence-** Andy Hughes  
Steve Reed 256.764.0873

**Montgomery-** 334.271.1293

**Opp-** Roger Stone/ Lee Joyner/ Doug Knight 334.493.0725

**Birmingham -**Jim Elrod/ Wendell Dodd 205.682-9441

**Dothan-** Eddie Biss/Charles Goldsmith/ Paul Cowley Tallmadge Butler 334.792.1100

**Jasper-** Bill Daniel  
205.384.3882

**Eufaula-** Tim Stevenson  
334.616.0061

**Cullman-** Fred Wilks 256.737.7234

**Oxford-** Winfred Logan 256.831.2964

**Gadsden-**Richard Bradford  
256.442.3208

**Mobile-** Dave Tarvin  
Candler Cain /Richard Handy

251.340.6387

### Florida

**Crestview-** Jim Vail 850.689.0300

**Fort Walton-** Frank Dole  
850.862.1069

**Marianna-** Gino Mayo/ Ernie Gray  
850.526.3577

**Panama City-** Mike Young Craig Brannon /Michael Dease  
850.769.0055

**Pensacola-** Bill Eddins/ Shane Tucker/ Joseph McNulty  
850.474.7288

### Georgia

**Marietta/Rome-** Don Reed  
Johnnie Porter / Doug Mills  
770.951.6251

**Stockbridge-**  
Oliver Cameron/ LaRita Primrose  
770.389.5760

**Bainbridge-** Andy Glover  
229.246.6330

**Newnan-** Asa Mangham/ Ken Rose  
770.502.1104

**Riverdale-** LaRita Primrose  
770.907.2410

**Lawrenceville-** Jamie Kauffman  
770.822-6377

### South Carolina

**Greenville-** Dave Garner  
Rickey Millwood/864.329.0588

**Columbia-** Edison Cheeks  
803.213.9986

**Charleston-** Greg Mason  
Alan Poe/Frank Butler  
843.529.3100

### Tennessee

**Cookeville -**Barry Boggs  
931.528.5133

### Mississippi

**Tupelo -** Ryan French 662.844.9725

**Jackson -** Bill Chatham  
601.362.7801

**Tupelo-** Earl McAnally/  
662.844.7372

**Starkville-** Marquette Rodgers Sandra Brock

### **Recovery and Discovery After Loss**

Recovery from grief does not mean that you will resume life as if nothing ever happened. It is not life as usual, or life back to normal; it is the discovery of a "new normal". In short, it means that you will discover how to go on with your loss and how to deal with your pain. Grief recovery is the human experience of finding hope and discovering the "new normal" for our lives. It is during this process that you will need to hold fast to the symbols of hope that surround you everyday. This could be the encouragement of faith, or the empathic ear of a trusted friend. C.S. Lewis in his classic book "A Grief Observed", tells of a man who had his arm amputated. He compares this amputees experience to that of someone who has experienced the loss of a loved one. Once the man's arm is removed, he will began the slow process of healing. He will experience pain, awkwardness, and perhaps phantom pains for sometime. The cold dreary days will often make the pain worse. Even when the stump is completely healed, he will always be a "one armed man." The adjustments will be made and he will eventually learn how to "go on" with his life, but it will never be the same as before. He will be reminded often that something is missing from his life. The loss of someone we love is in many ways like loosing a part of our self. It hurts; it produces scares, and it will forever leave us changed. Remember that the coldest days often produce the bluest skies. Life will go on, and you will discover the process of recovery, and when you do, you will find yourself in the midst of a "new normal" that can produce happiness, purpose, and life, beyond your loss.

## HOPE NOTES

**KIDS and Grief****Karen Peeples-Hild, MS IMH-5034****Gentiva Hospice Division Bereavement Camp Program Manager****Get your kids talking...**\_\_\_\_\_

As adults, sometimes it is difficult to put your feelings into words...well the same is true for children. It is commonplace for many parents or guardians to feel helpless or anxious when it comes to children who are experiencing grief. You can help your child express their feelings about a recent death or loss with this simple exercise....

Have your child finish the following sentences....

The saddest thing is .....

If I had one more chance to talk to the person who has died, I would say ....

My best memory is .....

If I could change anything, I would change .....

I wish .....

While you may not be able to "fix" your child's grief, these sentences will encourage conversation and communication. Try this exercise with your kids...it can be great for the adults in your life too.

**The Truth About Grief****J. Chris Adams DMin,****Spiritual and Bereavement Services Program Manager; Gentiva Hospice Division**

It seems everyone is an expert when it comes to grief and loss; however, separating fact from fiction is vitally important as you walk this winding road called grief. Well intended advice may cause you to take a detour that could lengthen the process and create confusion along the way.

A common myth related to grief is that if you ignore the pain it will go away faster. The truth is when you ignore the pain you only delay its resurfacing at a later date and often it returns with greater intensity. Facing your pain and experiencing the hard emotions of grief is one of the healthiest activities you can engage.

Sometimes you will hear someone say, "you need to be strong in the face of loss." Again, this is a myth that is based on false assumptions. The fact is that crying, feelings of sadness, and fear are not signs of weakness, but rather signs of your humanness. Putting up a strong front does not protect you or your family; showing your emotions will help you and them in the long run.

Another myth is the other side of the above mentioned coin. Occasionally you will hear someone say, "if you do not cry then you must not have cared or be sorry over the loss." crying is a normal response to the death of a loved one, however, not everyone responds with tears. A lack of tears does not mean that you do not care or that the loss is not painful. Those without tears need support and comfort just like everyone else.

You probably have heard the myth that says, "if you move on with your life it means you must forget about your loved one. Moving on does not mean you have forgotten, it means you have accepted. You can move on and maintain the precious memories of your loved one at the same time. Moving on is not forgetting.

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3870 Leeds Ave.  
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**FREE CHURCH & COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR**

**The 2010 Health Fair will be held on  
Saturday, June 12, 2010 from 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.**

**(Free health screenings, health & safety information)**

**Royal Missionary Baptist Church  
4761 Luella Avenue  
N. Charleston, SC 29405-5133**

