

## In This Issue

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## JOIN US every Thursday!

### 2023 Continuous Care Support Groups



#### Grief Support Daytime Meetings

TIME: 1:00–2:30p.m.

#### LOCATION:

Cabin Coffee, 2040 Kimball Ave., Waterloo

#### Grief Support Evening Meetings

TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.

#### LOCATION:

Locke Tower Park, 4140 Kimball Ave, Waterloo

#### DATES:

April 6, 13, 20, 27

May 4, 11, 18, 25

June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

*Please feel free to bring a friend*

All groups are *free* and open to the public! Call with questions at 319-233-6138.

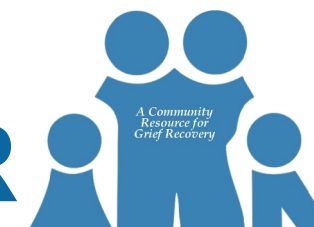
**WEATHER ALERT:** If schools are closed due to weather, the meeting is canceled.

Want to be on our mailing list? Give us a call, and we can add you to our quarterly newsletter list.

Continuous Care  
1519 West Fourth Street  
Waterloo, IA 50702



# THE CARE COURIER



April– June 2023, Vol 9 Issue 2

## BOUNDARIES: SAYING YES AND SAYING NO

*Grief is like a huge wound. It takes time, patience, and grace to sit in the center of all the overwhelming feelings. But know, that when you openly mourn that wound will heal. People will try to hurry you to move on. Don't. It's a challenge to deal with expectations when you feel weak. May this article help you establish boundaries which are the rules and limits we decide in our relationships. Healthy boundaries allow you to say "no" in some situations. They also let you open yourself to say "yes" when you choose to. Understanding your rights as a mourner will strengthen you as you deal with expectations.*

### IDENTIFY EXPECTATIONS

"How did the week go for you?" Margaret the group leader looked around the room. One by one people shared.

"I'm having a hard time standing up for myself, Vivian sighed. "My children are pushing me to sell the farm and move into Senior Living. But I'm fine! I lost George, I don't want to lose my home too!"

"It's been a year since Steve died. Now my friends are trying to set me up saying I need to move on," complained Sheila.

"I was okay at the grocery store until I automatically put Oreos into the cart. I couldn't stop crying. Ronnie loved Oreos," said Donna. I shouldn't be crying at the grocery store!"

"My girlfriend took me to see "80 For Brady." It was silly and we laughed so hard. Later I just felt so guilty" confessed Jessica. "Can I have fun and mourn?"

"All the things I have to do, it's never-ending and I'm exhausted," admitted Marla. "Dan always paid the bills, did the yard work, and fixed things. Now I have to do it all and I don't know how!"

"Sounds like you all are dealing with expectations by others and yourselves," Margaret observed. "Know that you don't have to live up to them. You have the right to process your grief in your own unique way."

### MOURNERS' RIGHTS

"You deserve to heal. Grieving takes time," Margaret added. "Be gentle with yourself. Go at your own pace and know you have rights as a mourner. It's okay to say 'no' when you need to. Or say 'yes' too. I think this will help you clarify and firm up your boundaries." Margaret stood and dispersed **Mourners' Rights**. Let's read them out loud:"

- I have the right to experience my own unique grief.
- I have the right to feel what I am feeling, regardless of how those feelings shift from moment to moment,
- I have the right to be angry.
- I have the right to be treated as a capable person.
- I have the right to say NO.
- I have the right to privacy.
- I have the right to ask for help.
- I have the right to be listened to.
- I have the right to be treated with respect.
- I have the right to socialize when ready.
- I have the right to cry--or not.
- I have the right to express my feelings.
- I have the right to be upset.
- I have the right to be supported.
- I have the right to express my needs.
- I have the right to talk about my grief.
- I have the right to experience joy.
- I have the right to feel a multitude of emotions, or not.
- I have the right to be tolerant of my physical and emotional limits.
- I have the right to experience unexpected bursts of grief.
- I have the right to use healing rituals, including the funeral.
- I have the right to embrace my spirituality.
- I have the right to have fun.
- I have the right to be disappointed.
- I have the right to search for meaning in life and death.
- I have the right to treasure my memories.
- I have the right to be alone.
- I have the right to be given time for the healing process.

(GriefWork by Fran Zamore and Ester R.A. Leutenberg, pg.33)

"Sometimes I'm feeling five of these things at one time. I want to be alone and at the same time I need to talk about my grief," said Ted. "Grief is painful and confusing. This affirms I'm not crazy and gives me permission to stand up for myself."

“Who knew that healthy grieving means respecting your boundaries,” observed Marla.

“I think my adult children need to read this too,” Vivian admitted. “It will help us to share and sort out our feelings.”

### AFFIRMATIONS

Donna held up her paper. “I’m writing these as affirmations. Here are some of them:”

- I am treasuring my memories.
- I am giving myself lots of time to heal.
- I am expressing my needs and talking about my grief.
- I am allowing myself to feel joy, sorrow, disappointment, and every crazy emotion.
- I am speaking honestly about my needs and it’s ok to say no. But ok to say yes too.
- I am questioning, doubting, trusting, and growing in my faith.
- I am taking baby steps every day and know I am slowly getting things done.

**HOMEWORK:** Read the **Mourners’ Rights** out loud when you get up in the morning. Affirmations train your brain to create these as your perceived reality. Try writing your own. Consider sharing the list and talking with family or friends. These will help you identify issues you might not have been aware of. That ‘elephant in the room’ might just need some mutual understanding. Clarity and kindness along with humility, forgiveness, and humor always help. Be patient with yourself.

VickiJolene Lindley Reece<sup>©</sup>, Continuous Care Coordinator

Spring is about hope, new beginnings, transformations and opportunities.



### Inspirational Quotes

- Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today. – Thich Nhat Hanh
- We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope. – Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Hope springs eternal in the human breast: Man never is, but always to be blest. – Alexander Pope
- God's mercy and grace give me hope - for myself, and for our world. – Billy Graham
- Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness. – Desmond Tutu
- To live without Hope is to Cease to live. – Fyodor Dostoevsky
- Courage is like love; it must have hope for nourishment. – Napoleon Bonaparte
- Spring will come and so will happiness. Hold on. Life will get warmer – Anita Krizzan
- The promise of spring’s arrival is enough to get anyone through the bitter winter – Jen Selinsky

### A CARD IN THE MAIL

*“When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand.” -- Henri Nouwen*

In a world of email, texts, and posts it is easy to forget the power of a handwritten note. I think of this as I pick up the mail and sort through flyers, bills, and newsletters. My heart leaps when I see the return address of a friend. Her personal encouragement is like pure gold.

There’s something about a personal note isn’t there? Consider sharing your memories about their loved one. Here are some prompts to get you started:

*I always appreciated his...  
I remember when...  
I will miss...  
I remember the last time we were together...  
When we were kids, she would...  
Please know...  
She made me laugh when...  
He made a difference by...  
I am thankful for...*

Bring your warm and tender hand to write the memories that bring tears and joy to the bereaved. He/she needs to know months after the funeral that you care. Help children to send their pictures and notes too. **Snail mail is good.** Go buy some stamps. You’ll be glad you did.

### SEASONS OF GRIEF - THE MUDDY MIDDLE

“Robins! Tulips! Easter candy!” Jessica smiled. “Those were the answers the kids in my kindergarten class gave when I asked them for signs of spring.” She paused. “Then Bobby’s voice boomed: ‘MUD!’

The whole grief group erupted with laughter.

“Mud. I never thought about it before, but Bobby is right,” grinned Ted.

“I’ve been thinking about mud. Usually, I complain. But you know, it made me realize the hope that there’s more coming after such a dark cold period in my life. I can’t wait for the warmth, the flowers, the potential of life again,” Jessica continued.

“Last fall Steve and I planted all kinds of daffodils.” Sheila’s eyes misted. “Funny you say this because I’ve been really sentimental checking on them as they’re starting to push their way through the dirt. I feel that way, that somewhere deep within I’ve got what it takes to get through this. That I have to do the same. Push through the muck and mire.”

“That’s both heavy and hopeful,” Ted observed. “I’m grateful for the seasons. That spring and summer always follow winter.

“George always said farmers had to trust God and Mother Nature for a good crop. Seasons can be tricky. But we always hoped,” added Vivian. “Fifty years of harvests before he died. But we had to wait for the mud to dry before we planted.”

“Maybe we could think about our grief as the ‘Muddy Middle?’” Margaret countered. “That season where things are melting, and we’re anticipating the warmth of the return of some kind of normal life again. But right now?”

“It’s messy.” Sheila finished Margaret’s question. “And I don’t like it. I feel crazy!”

### SEASON OF SHOCK

“Feeling crazy is pretty normal, comforted Margaret. “When we first enter the winter of our grief it’s really hard. There’s the SHOCK. That season can be long or short as we deal with the reality of our loss. Some of you experienced disbelief, numbness, search, and even wanted to die yourself. Didn’t you? Margaret looked around the table at the nodding heads.

“I ran on fumes. People kept saying how strong I was getting through the funeral and all. Like that was a good thing. Frankly, I don’t remember much; it was unreal.”

“It didn’t last long. I mean grief isn’t over. I miss the shock. That numbness, that blur really cocooned me after Tina died of Covid.” Ted crossed his arms over his chest. “It’s what follows that I hate!”

### SEASON OF DISORGANIZATION

“Ted, I think you speak for the group,” affirmed Margaret. “Most of you are in this season of DISORGANIZATION. It’s kind of a mix of winter and spring in Iowa. Just when you think it’s Spring? You get a blizzard! This season is the most challenging. But it can be shortened if you allow yourself to feel the feelings instead of packing them away and rushing to get back to normal life. Much like your daffodils. Buried deep inside, needing to push through the dirt to get to the light and be their true selves I want you to hold onto that this Spring. You will push through this, but it takes time.” Margaret gave them a hopeful yet resigned smile. “What have you experienced?”

The group spent the next hour processing their experiences, accepting that everyone is different. Some of the symptoms included:

Forgetfulness	Anger
Guilt	Confusion
Relief	Confusion
Sadness	Yearning
Sleepiness or Sleeplessness	Dreams or Nightmares
Fear	Suicidal thoughts
Depression	Loss or Increase of Appetite
Apathy	Anticipation of Loved One
Increase or Decrease of Faith	Physical aches
	Overwhelm, Isolation

“What I have to remember is that all these things cycle around. And I’m not crazy. This is normal. But isn’t there some sort of order?” cast hopeful eyes on Margaret.

“I’m sorry but grief doesn’t happen in orderly stages. You don’t get through one, cross it off the list and move on. But there is a process. You have to hang in there and trust that if you do the inner work it will get better.” Margaret turned to the group. “What has helped you?”

Jessica beamed, “This group. You guys understand and don’t judge me. Thanks. My friends and family too.”

“Understanding Your Grief by Dr. Alan Wolfelt. It’s given me insights, comfort, and encouragement,” Sheila said, thumping her copy.

“I got a notebook where I keep track of all the things I have to do. It helps. So do the Sticky Notes. They help me remember things.” Vivian proudly pulled it from her purse.

“I’m crying through it. But I realize I was drinking too much wine to cope. Now I’m going to the gym in the evenings with my husband.” Jessica flushed. “I’m embarrassed to tell you that.”

“It’s okay Jessica. You lost a baby. That had to be traumatic. Tina used to work with trauma. There’s a stage called *Self-repair* where you can get stuck. Sounds like you got out of that trap,” assured Ted. “I don’t know what I’d do without my church. It’s my faith that keeps me going.”

### SEASON OF REORGANIZATION

“Keeping going is the name of the game,” advised Margaret. “When my husband died, I made myself get up every morning, make my bed, eat my breakfast and take a walk. Just getting outside helped as I began to rebuild my life. Slowly order did begin to return. Eventually, I got things done. Little by little. I think my values have changed.”

“I’m reinventing myself now. I know I’m finding balance as I make new choices and sort things out. I’m getting close to normal, but I’ll never be the same. A new normal?”

Margaret winked. “A New Normal is the goal, like that daffodil that turns its face to the sun. She’s no longer a bulb; she’s a flower. Same but different?”

“Yes. I think this whole process is transforming us so that we can carry on and make a good life even without our loved ones.” Vivian wiped her eyes. “I’ll always miss George. But maybe I’ll be able to make some new choices. Probably my kids are right. The farm is too much for me. Lots of my friends moved to Senior Living. But not yet. They need to give me more time.”

“Time. Give yourselves time. I leave you with this quote by James Frey. “Be patient and wait. Your mud will settle. Your water will clear.” Margaret smiled. “You all are doing this. I’m proud of you. Carry on and take a walk in the sun this week.... before it snows again!”