

Encouraging Words

The first week after my husband passed away, I showered, brushed my teeth, did my hair, and wore clean clothes every day. My house was overrun with friends and family and every five minutes another delivery of flowers or food arrived on my doorstep. With all these people around, peering with concern at me over the top of the glasses, I had no choice but to maintain appearances and keep myself together. In truth, I had never had so much time to brush my hair or put on make-up. My endless to-do list kept me busy enough, but lying awake all night long gave me plenty of time to spare.

As soon as the funeral was over, however, all bets were off.

I went from daily showers to one every other day. Then every third day. Then... well, you get the idea. Doing laundry meant looking at my husband's clothes lying on the laundry room floor. So I just didn't do the laundry. Problem solved.

Not having to go to work for a couple weeks made it easy to avoid leaving the house (except to dash out to the mailbox) and a trip to the gym seemed downright ludicrous. My days were filled with endless grief work – crying, filling out paperwork, returning phone calls, and crying some more.

I knew I wasn't taking care of myself and I didn't care.

Eventually I had to return to work and things like brushing my teeth resumed out of necessity (and what little spark of vanity I had left). However, it wasn't until I joined a local grief group that I began to understand the importance of self-care. That being gentle with myself, and making sure I was physically okay, actually made me feel better.

As time went on, the more I took care of myself, the more manageable I found my grief. If I was rested and content, the grief somehow didn't feel so big. It gave me the strength I needed to tackle my grief each day and create lasting changes in my life.

Now self-care has almost become second nature to me. I'm always looking for new ways to improve my mental and physical health – whether it be through meditation, a massage, or just curling up with a good book. I've had to learn to make myself my own priority and, as a result, have found a better way of living with my grief."

Emily Clark lost her husband unexpectedly and is "attempting to survive this journey and make the most of what is left of my life, one day at a time."

For more of Emily's story, visit <http://emilygarvinonedayatatime.blogspot.com/>



We All Need Support

Grieving is a personal and highly individual experience. And how we grieve depends on many factors. One thing that we all need, though, is support.

Support comes through many different forms. Support can come through a friend, a family member, or a pastor. Support can come through a letter, an email, or a phone call. Support can come through faith and religious traditions, and beliefs.

We can also find support through ourselves. As we take time to grieve in whatever ways that are best and right for ourselves, we are practicing healthy self-care thus supporting ourselves.

Unfortunately, support isn't always as easy to find as many of us would like. Sometimes even those who try to support us end up hurting us instead. Though we all want support in different ways at different times in our grief, it can be hard to figure out how to make sure our needs are met.

Throughout this newsletter, we hope that the practical suggestions, along with helpful information, can be of support to you as you grieve.

We want you to know that even if you don't think you have anyone in your life that can be there for you in this time, you are not alone. We are here for you, to support and encourage you in whatever way possible. If you would like personal visits or phone calls, please call and request to speak with the bereavement coordinator. If you would prefer some recommended resources (books, websites, movies, etc.), we would love to find the right resource for where you are at in your grief journey. We also offer support groups and / or we can refer you to trusted counselors. We can even help your support people become more effective in supporting you!

If there is anything we can do for you, please, don't hesitate to contact us; it is our honor to serve you in this difficult time.

An Inside Look at the Beatles

"Help!" is a song by the Beatles that served as the title song for both the 1965 film and its soundtrack album. It was also released as a single, and was number one for three weeks in both the United States and the United Kingdom. "Help!" was written by John Lennon and recorded by John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

What many don't know about "Help!" is that the song actually relates to what Lennon was truly feeling as the famous Beatle.

"I mean it. It's real! It's just me singing "Help!" and I meant it. When "Help!" came out, I was crying out for help. Most people think it's just a fast rock'n'roll song. I didn't realize it at the time; I just wrote it at the time because I was commissioned to write it for the movie. But later, I knew I really was crying out for help. [I was] very insecure...completely lost. And I am singing about when I was so much younger and all the rest, looking back at how easy it was...I was crying out for help."

www.beatlesebooks.com/help/

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

We All Need Support	1
An Inside Look at the Beatles	1
Healthy Self-Care Tips	2
Finding a Support Team	2
My Support Team	3
Spiritual Care Corner	3
Encouraging Words	4

THE MISSION OF GRACE

For each employee to treat every patient as their own treasured loved one, providing care that affords a quality of life that outweighs quantity of days, and supports caregivers as their hearts find healing.

Healthy Self-Care Tips

Take Time

Make sure to take time alone and take time with others whom you trust and who will listen when you need to talk (do each when you are ready). Make sure to allow yourself however many months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings that go along with loss.

Face and express your feelings

The painful emotions that come with grief are a natural and normal response to loss. You can try and suppress them or hide from them all you want but, in the end this will only make the grieving process last longer. Acknowledging your pain and taking responsibility for your feelings will help you avoid the problems of unresolved grief such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and health problems.

Get rest and be replenished

You may now need extra amounts of things you needed before. Hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a “cause” to work for, or to help others - any of these may give you a lift. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people and things you love.

Feel whatever you feel

It’s okay to be angry, to yell at God, to cry, or not to cry. It’s also okay to laugh, to find moments of joy, or to let go when you’re ready. Your grief is your own and no one can tell you when you should be “over it” or when to “move on.”

Draw comfort from your faith

Spiritual activities, such as praying, meditating, and going to church, can offer peace. If you’re questioning your faith in this time, feel free to seek out help from a trusted friend or someone in your religious community.

Join a support group

Grief can leave you feeling lonely, even with loved ones around. Support groups allow us to share our story and to draw on strength from others who are also going through loss. If this interests you, feel free to contact us and we can make sure you find what you need.

Plan ahead for grief triggers

Anniversaries, holidays, and milestones can reawaken memories and feelings. Be prepared for these moments and know that they have the potential to be hard emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

It’s the small things

Don’t underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures when you are ready. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food – all are small steps towards regaining your pleasure in life itself.

Healthy is helpful

Look after your health but be aware of short-term relievers – these can be food, alcohol/drugs, anger, exercise, TV, movies, books, isolation, sex, shopping, working too much, etc. Most of these are not harmful – in fact, some are healthy – but they become harmful when they are used for the wrong reasons (to cover-up, hide, or ignore our grief). Try to get good sleep, make healthy food choices, and be physically active.

Most importantly, allow yourself to grieve in whatever ways are best and right for you, because that is the best form of self-care.



Finding a Support Team

Sometimes in our grief, our friends and family can be awkward with us. It’s not that they mean to be awkward, but sometimes in difficult situations others just don’t know what to do. It’s helpful to remember that they also might be suffering with grief – theirs and ours – and they might not even realize it.

It’s helpful to understand, too, that the American culture doesn’t know how to deal with death or grief very well. Most of us were never taught how to be there for others in difficult times.

Although many of your friends and family might want to help you, they might not know how to help and so might not do anything at all. This doesn’t mean that they don’t love or aren’t thinking about you.

Still, others might do something or say things you wished they hadn’t. Remember, most people aren’t trying to make things worse. They really do just want to help.

That being said, some of your family and friends might not actually be able to help you in your grief. Every person is unique and different and has different experiences according to the life they have lived.

Some people in your life might want to try tell you how you should act or grieve. Some might not be able to sit with you or resist saying unhelpful trite clichés. You need to make wise choices as you spend time with others who are there to support you.

You might realize that, with even some of your closest friends and family members, you can’t be with some of them – and maybe it’s not because of anything they’ve said or done, but it’s more of an intuitive feeling. That’s okay. You have the right to say, *“You are my friend, but you’re not the right support person for this particular problem,”* or, *“I love you, but I can’t be around you right now.”* The main point here is that you take time to be with the people who actually will support you, instead of being with those who might drag you down or refuse to allow you to grieve.



My Support Team

For those people in your life who you would like to be able to support you well, we’ve included a basic list that you can pass along to your support people so they can know how best to interact with you.

Call Often. And if I don’t answer my phone or call back, please forgive me – and please keep trying. I will need your calls even more after the first couple of months. Please realize that I need you to take the initiative here – I will need you to call me since my energy level may be too low for me to make the effort, even though I may need to talk.

Try to offer a specific date to do something with me. Try to think of my “down” times, evenings and weekends particularly. And please, be specific. I might not know what to do or where to go while I’m wrestling through my grief.

Feel free to talk about my loved one. Please use my loved one’s name. It will help me if we can share memories; even it feels a little uncomfortable or awkward. Though it might be hard to hear the mention of my loved one’s name, it is also beautiful music to my ears.

Some days will be better than other days for me; Some hours will be better than other hours for me. Realize that although I may seem to be “doing so well,” I still have a lot of grief to work through.

Feel free to cry with me or in my presence. If you feel like crying when talking to me, it’s okay. Crying together is better than avoiding the pain.

You may not know what to say; that’s alright...neither do I sometimes. But if all that comes to mind are the typical clichés or well-intended sayings (“I understand exactly how you feel,” “At least she’s in a better place,” etc.), please, just don’t say anything. A hug or a squeeze of your hand means more than a hundred ill-chosen words.

Food will almost always be welcomed; cooking can be such a hard task. Bring food or invite me to dinner. But please realize that my home is a place of safety and security for me, so I might be more inclined to reject an invitation to your house and accept you coming to mine.

Grief is never the same and is unpredictable. There might be times I want to be alone. There might be times when you hear that I spent time with someone other than you. Even though we might be really close, you might find out that I’ve been spending a lot of time with some distant friend or relative, and you might be tempted to feel betrayed or hurt. Please forgive me for this. Know that I am not trying to hurt you; rather, I am trying to walk this path the best way that seems right for me.

Spiritual Care Corner

Especially in times of grief, many people turn to faith and religious traditions in order to find ways to cope with loss.

Sometimes people turn to faith or God and get mad, wondering why they have to go through so much pain and wondering why God didn’t help them. And that’s ok.

Sometimes people turn to faith in order to cope with loss and to move towards healing. An example of this would be the “Sabbath rest.”

To take a “Sabbath rest” means that you would take a break from work and your normal day-to-day activities in order to more fully mourn for your loved one and find healing. It means others cook for you and clean for you. It means you are able to be and do whatever you need to be and do without worrying about things that aren’t necessary.

“Sabbath rest” can be for weeks or months, or can be a few hours set aside during the day. It can be for as long or as short as you need it to be.

This month, we invite you to try a “Sabbath rest.”