

# Living with Grief



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As autumn leaves fall and winter draws near, grief can be thick in the air. November is National Hospice and Palliative Care month. Both palliative care and hospice services are an extremely helpful and supportive resource to individuals and their families as they face terminal illness.

The staff at Pike County Health Department, Home Health & Hospice are blessed to be a part of that caregiving team and assist in providing comfort and support during such a critical and tender time in one's life. For those of you who may be contemplating hospice services, grieving for changes in your own health, or bereaving a loved one who has died please be mindful that grief IS a soul-based journey, there is NO time table and each of us experience and express grief differently.

According to playwright Robert Frost, "death ends one physical life, it does not end a relationship." Our loved one lives on in us, through us, and within our memories and their legacy. They are never forgotten. Nonetheless, a person's life is forever changed by the death of someone they love. Grief transforms us as one searches for finding meaning in living after a loss. When facing a loss through death one might ask "how can I help?" First, be mindful of your fears and concerns of saying the wrong thing. Simply, be openly honest and let your loved one know that you are sorry for their loss and are aware they are hurting. Reflect on specific memories of the one who has passed and acknowledge the significant roles and influence that person had on your life and others. Respect boundaries and allow time to grieve in a way that is necessary for that individual given their grief is within healthy parameters.

If concerned about one's grief response, be open to the idea and acknowledge that for some of us additional counseling and services may be needed as they journey through their pain and loss. Again, healing takes time and going inward is necessary so expect a variable of emotions. Kebeir Ross indicates 5 stages of grieving a loss: denial and shock, anger, bargaining, depression and sorrow, and acceptance. As one experiences loss they fluctuate through these stages. During this fluctuation, grief comes in waves and at times it comes when we least expect it and can knock us off our feet with the severity of emotion felt. So expect that the waves will hit forcefully but that like waves the emotion shall ease if one just allows themselves permission to experience their feelings and embrace their grief vs suppress or deny their pain. Grief requires depression, irritability, anxiety, tears, and loss of control. Healthy grief also requires gentle time for us to regain our purpose and create new meaning in our life. How much time one might ask, again grief is a sacred, healing journey and there are no definitions on time, we need to honor the process and our needs so healing can continue at its pace.

Lastly, send cards, calls, emails, texts to let the bereaved know that you are thinking of them and have not forgotten that they are hurting and adjusting to life without their loved one. Special dates like Birthdays, Anniversaries, and Holidays are often tender times. One can also offer to run an errand, help mow the lawn, or take them to appointments or places of worship or business. Sharing and reminding them you are near and have not forgotten them as they continue their healing journey.

May I close with this sacred wisdom shared by Kahlil Gibran, "The essence of grief is a profound loneliness. And we have the opportunity as we encounter those who are grieving to assuage a bit of that loneliness. We CAN'T fix the deep hurt but we can assure them we care and that they are not alone in their journey." Be mindful of that whether you are currently enduring your own journey of grieving or befriending a loved one who is.

We are a NOT-FOR-PROFIT, County Based Hospice; governed by members of your community. We are also excited to announce our plans for potential upcoming events such as Children's Bereavement Mini Camps and a Giving Tree Memorial; please call for additional information. For additional bereavement resources, support, or to make a referral to hospice please contact Amy Becker, Pike County Hospice Coordinator at 324-2111. Resources include: Monthly Bereavement Support Group, literature for individuals, children, parents, visits, and consultations. Pike County Hospice is your hometown hospice provider; giving back is our passion and business.

– Anna Wilson, Hospice Social Worker