

To those who are grieving:

If you find yourself reading these words, it is probably because a loved one has just died. My hope in creating this guide is that it will help you as you move through the pain and as you search for a sense of balance and peace.

You often hear people make comments like, “you just need to get over it.” My belief is that you do not “get over” grief. You move through it. You learn how to live with it. You learn how to re-engage in life. Each person’s journey is unique to them. It takes the time it takes for you as an individual.

This is not a complete guide. There are many, many resources available as you move through grief. This is meant to be just a starting point.

With warmest regards,

Debra Disney, MEd, LCPC

## Setting the Stage

Grief is a reaction to a loss. It can be any kind of loss – loss of a job or loss of a marriage. Here, we are talking specifically about the loss after a loved one has died. The reaction to loss is multi-faceted - emotional, physical, and spiritual. *Emotionally*, you may be experiencing many feelings including, but not limited to, sadness, loneliness, anger, and regret. *Physically*, you may be having difficulty eating and sleeping. You may be feeling tightness in your chest, churning in your stomach, or even bone-deep weariness. *Spiritually*, you may be questioning your life-long held beliefs about the nature of God. Grief is a complex experience through which it takes time to move.

Sometimes a picture can help us to understand new territory. Here is a description of a picture that might describe grief:

You were standing on the bank of a river. Your feet were on solid ground, and you felt safe. You had created the landscape around you to include items that felt right to you – your health, your job, your relationships, your finances, your daily habits, your hopes and dreams for the future.

Then, your loved one died. The emotional impact has pushed you into the river. For a period of time, there is nothing to do but flail about, treading water, trying to keep your head above water so you can breathe, so you can live. You don't know how deep the water is. You don't know how long you will be forced to stay in the water. You don't even know what to do to get out of the threatening situation. It doesn't even feel real; it doesn't feel like this could be happening.

Slowly, you come to realize that this is very real. It really is happening. You have three choices:

1. You can keep looking longingly over your shoulder at the bank from which you were pushed – longing for life to be the way it used to be. This will never happen. Life will never be the same again. Period. Life has forever changed, and if you keep trying to get back to where you were, you will continue to emotionally suffer.
2. You can stay where you are, treading water as fast as you can, in crisis mode, just trying to breathe. This option works for awhile, but you will eventually tire.
3. You can take stock of your situation and decide how to get to the other side. There is a bank on the other side of the river. Parts of the landscape are the same. Parts of the landscape are vastly different from life as you knew it. There will be a “new normal.” It can be a life with meaning and peace.

When you decide to move toward the other side of the river, you will start to construct a bridge to get you there. This bridge is unique to each person. For some it will include reaching out for support, through family, friends, or support groups. Others will choose to travel the bridge alone. There is no right or wrong way to travel this path. There is YOUR way. Be aware that this bridge is traveled one step at a time. It is a PROCESS. It takes

the time it takes for you. Don't let anyone rush you or slow you down. Just take the next step that is YOUR next step.

In the following pages, I hope you will find some resources that will help you to construct the bridge that is right for you as an individual.

---

**FIRST REMINDER: Quiet your anxious mind by quieting your anxious body**

---

***BREATHE!!***

You won't find the energy you need to move through this path if your body and emotions remain in crisis mode. There is a strong connection between the breath and emotions. You might notice that when you are feeling anxious, your body has responded with quick and shallow breaths. You can, in fact, make yourself feel anxious when you are otherwise calm, just by breathing quickly and shallowly. By intentionally breathing slowly and deeply, in other words, by calming your body, it helps your mind to calm.

- Anxious emotions = anxious body (quick and shallow breaths)
- Calm emotions = calm body (slow and deep "belly breaths")

By breathing slowly and deeply, you engage your body's natural relaxation response. It will help to

- decrease your heart rate
- lower your blood pressure
- decrease the stress hormone in the blood
- which all results in decreasing the anxiety you feel.

***STAY IN THE PRESENT MOMENT as much as possible***

Certainly it can bring comfort to recall wonderful moments spent with your loved one. It can be healing to laugh and share those memories with your family and friends. However, sometimes after a death, we also find our thoughts wandering into the regrets of the past or the fears and "what-if's" of the future. If we allow our minds to dwell too much on the past and future, we are likely to suffer more anxiety.

When we are able to stay focused on the present moment, we are more able to find peace of mind. We will never get perfect at achieving this goal, but perfection is not the goal. With practice, we simply get better at “thought-stopping” so that instead of dwelling in the fears for hours, we might only dwell in the fears for minutes. Eventually, the goal is to quickly be able to observe that our thoughts have wandered into the territory of fear and pain; stop; take a deep breath; and bring the thoughts back to the present moment. Peace of mind is more easily found when thoughts remain in the present moment.

The best tool I have found to practice staying in the present moment is mindfulness meditation. I have a Mindfulness Meditation CD that you can borrow. You can also find a number of resources about mindfulness meditation on the internet.

### **MOVE!**

Remember the teaching in physics class? A body in motion tends to stay in motion, and a body at rest tends to stay at rest. If you want your body to thrive, you will move it. At the very least, please incorporate walking, in short spurts, throughout the day, to send a message to your cells that you intend to *thrive!*

### **TAPPING!**

You might find it surprising to discover a very easy technique to calm your mind and body. It is called “tapping.” It is based on principles similar to those found in acupuncture. Meridian Tapping involves tapping on, or stimulating, specific points on your body that are associated with your meridian energy system. Unlike acupuncture, this technique is one you can do for yourself. This technique is a part of “Energy Medicine” or “Energy Psychology.”

Some quotes from nationally known physicians:

- **C. Norman Shealy, MD, PhD**, one of the founders of the American Holistic Medical Association  
"Energy medicine is the future of all medicine."
- **Mehmet C. Oz, MD**, the popular Oprah guest known as "Dr. Oz"  
"Energy Medicine is the next big thing."
- **Deepak Chopra, MD**

"We are each a localized field of energy and information with cybernetic feedback loops interacting within a nonlocal field of energy and information."

- **Dr. Joseph Mercola, DO (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, runs a popular alternative health web site)**  
"An option for excellent pain relief without any of the health hazards that typical pain relievers carry is Meridian Tapping Technique or MTT."

You can find more information by calling me or by going to these websites:

- <http://www.whatismtt.com/>
- [www.eftuniverse.com](http://www.eftuniverse.com)
- <http://www.bodytalksystem.com/learn/access/cortices.cfm>
- [http://www.thetappingsolution.com/index2\\_May.php](http://www.thetappingsolution.com/index2_May.php)

---

**SECOND REMINDER: Build your individual bridge toward healing**

---

**HELPFUL BOOKS**

***Some of my favorite books include the following:***

- Understanding Your Grief, by Dr. Alan Wofelt
- Happy for No Reason, by Marci Shimoff
- Finding the Center Within: The Healing Way of Mindfulness Meditation, by Thomas Bien, PhD & Beverly Bien
- When Things Fall Apart, by Pema Chodron
- SoulCollage, An Intuitive Collage Process for Individuals and Groups by Seena Frost

**HELPFUL CD's**

***Some of my favorite CD's include the following:***

- Guided Mindfulness Meditation, with Debra Disney and Stella O'Hanlon
- Meditations to Relieve Stress, by Belleruth Naparstek
- Healthy Sleep, with Dr. Andrew Weil
- Insight, Immrama Institute

## HELPFUL WEBSITES

- [www.griefnet.org](http://www.griefnet.org) GreifNet has email support groups.
- [www.centerforloss.com](http://www.centerforloss.com) Dr. Alan Wolfelt's site
- <http://www.aarp.org/relationships/grief-loss/>

## Local Grief Groups

OSF Hospice has meetings that are held at United Presbyterian Church on the corner of Northmoor and Allen Roads in Peoria	Every Tuesday	3:00 – 4:30 p.m.	Linda Evans, Bereavement Coordinator	(309) 683-7700
	Every Thursday	6:00 – 7:30 p.m.		
Open to the Public				

There are some area churches that periodically run grief groups. If you want a Christian-based grief group, you can contact me for an up-to-date list.

## SOME FINAL REMINDERS: Take some tips from others

Some great suggestions come from people who have traveled the path you are on. Some tips have come from books. Some of those tips are seen below.

### From the book, Picking Up the Pieces, by Sherri Magee and Kathy Scalzo

It can be helpful to write in a journal every day. If you can't think of anything to write, then consider answering the "Five Question Check-in." The answers do not even have to be complete sentences or have correct grammar.

1. What's happening with my body?
2. How am I feeling emotionally?
3. When I let my thoughts wander, what do I find myself thinking about?
4. Who did I connect with today?
5. What gave me a sense of peace?

## Some “Words to live by”

- “HERMAN “ which stands for

**H**umor,  
**E**xercise,  
**R**eligion,  
**M**editation,  
**A**ttitude,  
**N**iceness

- The four “H’s” - Hugs, Humor, Hobbies, Hope.
- The “F’s” to get through tough times – Friends, Faith, Family.
- A version of the serenity prayer

Change what I can, Accept what I can’t, Wisdom to know the difference.

I hope there has been a piece of information that has been helpful to you. Please remember that moving through grief is a journey. For some people, the journey back to a feeling of normalcy is brief, and for others that journey is long. There is no right or wrong way to move through this journey. It takes the time that it takes. Every person’s relationship with the deceased was unique to them, so every person is unique in what they will need to heal. You don’t “get over” grief. You move through it. You don’t get “closure;” you grow more accustomed to how to live life without that special person. Grief is hard work. Sadness is nature’s way of forcing us to slow down our lives to create a margin of time to allow our emotions to heal. Be patient and kind to yourself. Stay connected with your loved ones. Allow the happy memories to comfort you.

With warmest regards,

Debra