Dear Friends,

Periodically, I ask grieving people how they would define the word grief to someone, as if that person had never heard of the word. Grief is often described as heartache, loneliness, regrets, empty, anxiety, and fear of the unknown/future, and questioning purpose in life. Perhaps you’ve had similar thoughts or could further expand the definition.

Expectations of how one should cope with grief are typically set very high. Is this the arena where we want to over-achieve? Coping with grief can feel like a race, but who are you competing against? What is the hurry? The hurry comes in wanting to feel better emotionally. The emotions with grief are very powerful and can be frightening in intensity. Bereaved, over the years, remarked they thought they would handle grief “better than this.” Better than what? This invisible yardstick follows you around like a shadow. It is tricky attempting to measure something you can’t see. Even when you’ve experienced grief from other losses, it doesn’t guarantee you’ll grieve each one the same way. Well intentioned friends, family, or co-workers may make comments and suggestions about your coping skills. This fuels the race you have with yourself to “get better.”

Pay attention and listen to yourself, first. When in doubt about what to expect with grief or what is healthy coping, seek out information. Educate yourself about the normal feelings and experiences associated with grief. The more you know, the better you’ll be able to cope with grief. When you know what you are dealing with, it is a little easier to gage how you are doing on that invisible yardstick. Resources are available through your local hospice, libraries, internet, faith communities and counseling centers.

Thinking of you,

Amber, Joyce & Autumn
Bereavement Coordinators

Internet Grief Support Sites

www.hospicenorthiowa.com
www.webhealing.com
www.rainbows.org
www.griefshare.org
www.compassionatefriends.org (death of child)
www.bereavedparentsusa.org (death of child)
http://forums.grieving.com
http://childrengrieve.org (National Alliance for Grieving Children)
www.thelightbeyond.com
www.missfoundation.org (death of child)
www.griefnet.org
www.hellogrief.org (grief support for kids)
www.dougy.org (grief support for kids)
www.nationalshare.org (pregnancy & infant loss support)
www.survivorofsuicide.com
www.afsp.org (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention)
www.suicidology.org
Volunteer Training  
Spring 2019  
Tuesdays, April 16, 23 & 30th  
9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
United Bank & Trust  
400 Central Ave E, Hampton, Iowa

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MercyOne North Iowa Hospice  
Salad Luncheon  
Friday, April 26, 2019  
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Location: Immanuel Lutheran Church  
246 S Clark Street, Forest City, Iowa

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Wings of HOspicE Memorial &  
Butterfly Release  
Saturday, June 15, 2019  
1:00 p.m.  
First United Methodist Church  
119 S Georgia Ave, Mason City, IA

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Understanding Grief and Loss Support Group  
Sponsored by MercyOne North Iowa Hospice

This program provides grief education and support to any adult who has experienced a death of a family member or friend. Your loved one did not have to have received Hospice services in order for you to attend.

6 Thursday evenings ~ Mason City  
March 14th – April 18th, 2019  
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.  
North Iowa Hospice – Conference Room  
232 2nd St. SE, Mason City

6 Monday evenings ~ Charles City  
April 1st – May 6th, 2019  
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
Location to be determined

There is no charge for these groups, but space is limited. To register, please call:

MercyOne North Iowa Hospice  
1-800-297-4719 or 428-6208

Details for all of these events will be posted on our website as they become available.  
www.hospicenorthiowa.com
Community organizations have a variety of speakers and programs. A recent speaker began his talk with a poem, "The Power of One." It was a moving poem and the speaker said each of us had the power to make the world a better place. When I returned home, I searched for the poem on the Internet.

Written by an anonymous author, the poem made me think of my grief journey, a journey of multiple losses and profound sorrow. The fourth verse says one step starts a journey, one word starts a prayer, one hope raises your spirits, one touch shows you care. At the end, the author wrote, "You see, IT'S UP TO YOU!"

Grief recovery was up to me. In 2007 I lost four family members, my daughter (mother of our twin grandchildren), father-in-law, brother, and former son-in-law. Four deaths in nine months were so shocking I was almost immobile, both physically and emotionally. But I had lost other family members earlier in life and, thankfully, was able to assess my grief.

Just as the poem says, I knew one step would start the journey.

That step was to write about my grief. My daughter and father-in-law died the same weekend. A week later, I sat down at the computer and started writing short articles about grief-related topics. I also made a promise to myself: I'll write for a year, stop, and see what I find. Month after month, I continued to write articles and many of them were posted on a royalty-free website.

For me, writing is a spiritual experience, sort of like a prayer. Before I begin my writing day, I often meditate for a few moments. Five years ago I meditated about my husband and me becoming GRGs – grandparents raising grandchildren. I meditated about my new role, caregiving, and encouraging teens. Years passed, and thoughts from my meditations worked their way into my writing.

Slowly, four individuals, two loving grandparents, two energetic teenagers, merged into a grandfamily. We talked more, lingered at the dinner table, and laughed together. Our grandson began to ask my husband, a retired physician, medication questions that puzzled him. Our granddaughter, a wonderful writer herself, asked me about writing. Today, our house is the home they come home to, and I think they like coming home.

Each college break, each holiday, we await them eagerly, the back door opening, footsteps on the floor, and the call, "Hi, I'm home!" The twins both graduated from high school with honors, received college scholarships, and are succeeding in college. Their accomplishments give us, and them, hope for the future.

But I must be honest. There were times, really dark times, when I went backwards on the recovery path, and was almost out of hope. Thankfully, I had family, friends, and church to rely upon. I also knew myself, knew my coping skills, and was willing to create new ones. To put it another way, I believed in my power of me.

No matter where you are in your grief journey, you have that power. You can turn negative thoughts to positive, blame to acceptance, despair to hope. It isn't easy, I know, but the human spirit is resilient, and you can do it. When the darkness fades and light starts to appear, you can plan the new life that awaits you, and how you will tap your power of one.

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The Power of One

One song can spark a moment,
One flower can wake the dream.
One tree can start a forest,
One bird can herald spring.

One smile begins a friendship,
One handclasp lifts a soul.
One star can guide a ship at sea,
One word can frame the goal.

One vote can change a nation,
One sunbeam lights a room.
One candle wipes out darkness,
One laugh can conquer gloom.

One step must start each journey,
One word must start each prayer.
One hope will raise our spirits,
One touch can show you care.

One voice can speak with wisdom,
One heart can know what's true.
One life can make a difference,
You see, IT'S UP TO YOU!