July/August, 2020

Dear Friends,

During a recent outing to a familiar location, I happened to sit somewhere different. After taking another look around the surroundings, it became clear even in places known, there are things we don’t know, or even see. A different seat provides a different view, and if you care to examine it a little deeper, a different perspective.

Looking at something from a new angle is not a bad thing. It can be surprisingly refreshing if you’re willing to open yourself up to new ideas and possibly change opinions about someone or something.

Think back to what you thought grief was prior to your loved one’s death. Some common misconceptions about grief include the following statements:

~ People all over the world view grief in a similar way.
~ People who grieve appropriately get over their grief within 6 months.
~ People who still cry about a death a year later are experiencing pathological grief.
~ For family and friends of a person with a terminal illness, grieving begins at the time of death.
~ It is more helpful to the bereaved if the loss is not mentioned.

Thankfully, society’s beliefs about grief and how we cope with grief are changing. These beliefs changed because someone’s perspective changed, either as a result of grieving or a willingness to learn from people who grieve. Let’s not forget an important step in gaining new perspectives. Share this experience with others and educate them on what grief really is from someone who is living it.

Thinking of you,
Autumn and Joyce
Bereavement Coordinators
Wings of HOsPicE Memorial & Butterfly Release

Our annual Butterfly Release typically held in June had been postponed due to coronavirus. We're planning a virtual event and hope you are able to join us for this wonderful event!
Please watch our website for details.

Saturday, September 12, 2020 – 1:00 p.m.

https://www.mercyone.org/northiowa/hospice

Suicide Support Groups

Mason City: Contact Wendy Martinez  641-420-0049
Hampton: Contact Jill O'Dell  641-430-8034
Suggestions for Helping Children Cope with Grief

By Sasha J. Mudlaff, M.A.

- Be available - physically and emotionally.
- Listen...with your ears, eyes and heart.
- Remember that touch can sometimes say more than words.
- Answer ALL of the child's questions as directly and as honestly as you can even if the answer is, "I don't know." This expresses your respect toward the child and the very real feelings he or she is experiencing. Children tend to know when they aren't being told the whole truth; sometimes the answers they will come up with in their own minds are much more frightening than the truth.
- Face your own feelings of loss and grief. Sharing these feelings makes you vulnerable and in turn helps the child to feel more at ease becoming vulnerable in expressing his or her feelings. Children need to see the adults in their lives expressing their grief. This gives the child "permission" to grieve as well.
- Encourage and define appropriate expressions of grief (talking, drawing, writing, yelling, running, etc.). Provide appropriate and "safe" places for grief expression.
- Acknowledge the reality that the loss HURTS! Do not attempt to "rescue" the child (or yourself) from the hurt; allow the hurt to run its course. (This isn't easy!)
- Encourage the child to establish his or her own quiet, private place to go to whenever he or she needs to be alone.
- Do not isolate or insulate children from death or from grief.
- Try not to single out the grieving child for special privileges or compensations. The child needs to feel a part of his or her peer group and should be expected to function accordingly. This will help to encourage progression through the grieving process and "getting on with life".
- Maintain a daily routine if at all possible. Continuity provides children with a sense of security and stability during a time full of uncertainty.
- Try not to expect too much from yourself or from the child. Temper your expectations with kindness and understanding.
- Continue to be available long after you think the child should be "over it."
Top 10 List for Helping Grieving Children & Teens

By Sasha J. Mudlaff, M.A.

10. Get rid of assumptions and let the child or teen TEACH you about their grief

9. Deal with the FACTS
By clearly communicating the facts of a death you can help prepare a child or teen for the pain of grief by minimizing the additional pain and confusion that occur when facts aren’t communicated clearly or on purpose. Keep the facts consistent, clear and truthful.

8. Be Honest
Do not lie to children or teens. Trust is the essential element in all human relationships. *The trust of a child is trust in its most sacred form.*

7. Help with “connecting the dots”
Coach children and teens to continue to be true to who they are. Help them see how they can “take their grief with them” to their favorite activities and hobbies and even use those activities as an effective means for grief expression.

6. Encourage memorialization and ritual
Children and teens often have the best ideas for rituals – explore ideas together.

5. Connect with community (grief) resources
Peer support can be very healing for grieving children and teens as they realize that they aren’t alone in what they are experiencing.

4. Identify Secondary Losses
Secondary losses can be past, present or future. They can be physical, relational or material. Identifying secondary losses helps give children and teens “permission” to feel their pain as they realize how far-reaching their grief really is.

3. Validate feelings – especially anger
Many children believe there are *wrong* feelings. Validate any and all feelings and distinguish between feelings and behavior. Talk about the importance of expressing feelings and distinguish between the *good ways* and the *bad ways* of grief expression.

2. Model and teach how to honor life
There are two ways we honor someone special who has died:
• *The things we do to show honor* (lighting a candle, speaking their name, sharing memories, making a donation, visiting a place of memory, etc.)
• *The way we choose to continue to live our lives*

1. LISTEN