



## Winter to Spring...A new season in the grieving process

To say that this winter has been long and arduous would be an understatement. Although winter is often a good time to hunker down and indulge in quiet healing and contemplation it can also seem to go on forever as you begin your grief journey. Then suddenly the faithful crocus appears from beneath its white winter blanket and the robins begin their “spring is here” song and dance. There appears to be an instant transformation, an excitement in the air. But truthfully you may not feel ready for the new vigor as your winter mood, your grief, has been a safe place to hibernate. Not comfortable, but safe. The parts of us that have been frozen by grief have been likened to “a winter of the soul.” Not lifeless but resting in a dormant state as the reality of our loss settles in, and we regain our physical and emotional strength.

As the days become longer and warmer, we are reminded that life does move forward and perhaps this might be a good time to consider stepping back into the sunshine. Experience has proven that baby steps tend to be less stressful and help to support your path of healing. Jumping into big projects or taking on new responsibilities may feel like the right thing to do, at first, but often turn into being the source of stress and the potential for a grief meltdown. Take it slow and easy. Be gentle on yourself as you embrace the possibilities of this new season. Stop and take in the wonders that Mother Nature provides. Let the sun warm you as you step out into your next experience of life after loss and remember...the seeds of a silent winter emerge perfectly formed singing a song of remembrance and newness in the same breath.

Peace and comfort to you during this new season of renewal, warmth and growth. Dr. Karen

## Facts about crying...

Studies have determined that emotional tears related to grief and sadness release the “feel good” chemical oxytocin and endorphins which are natural pain inhibitors designed to recalibrate both your emotional and physical equilibrium. Tears flush stress hormones and toxins from your system producing a self-soothing mechanism designed to reduce pain and promote a sense of well-being.

So...I encourage you to embrace your tears and allow them to flow for as long as it takes to feel a positive shift. Don't hold back. Let your heart be the guiding factor and decide when enough is enough. As you may have already discovered, the grieving process has a life of its own and most of the time it is best to simply allow it to be what it is. Remember, trying to over control your feelings or self-criticism about how you should be feeling often cancels the ability to heal. Be compassionate with yourself and allow your tears to be an active part of your healing process. A good cry is good medicine.  
Peace to you, Dr. Karen

“There is a sacredness in tears.

They are not the mark of weakness, but of power.

They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues.

They are messengers of overwhelming grief and unspeakable love.”

-Washington Irving-





## “Lines Written in Early Spring”

by William Wordsworth

"I heard a thousand blended notes, while in a grove I sate reclined,  
in that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link the human soul that through me ran;  
And much it grieved my heart to think what man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower, the periwinkle trailed its wreaths;  
And 'tis my faith that every flower enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played, their thoughts I cannot measure;  
But the least motion which they made it seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan, to catch the breezy air;  
And I must think, do all I can, that there was pleasure there."



### Letter to a Friend...

Do you feel like your friends and family may need a little guidance and direction on how to go about supporting you during your grieving process? This letter templet may offer what you need to share.

Blessings to you as you continue on your path of healing. Dr. Karen

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing you this letter because I value your friendship and love you beyond measure. What I want to share is that since \_\_\_\_\_'s death I have been in a deep well of grief.

I am asking for your patience in supporting me as I move along this difficult path. I know that it is hard to see me in this place of great sadness, but no one can fix this pain that I am feeling. I need to grieve in my own way and the best gift you can give me is your shoulder to cry on, a hug and a listening ear.

Sometimes the clichés that are intended to be words of support are hurtful so when they pop up please don't share them with me. Please know that the phrase "I am here for you" is the best thing to say when I am experiencing a grief meltdown. I appreciate calls so please don't withdraw from our friendship. It makes me feel like I'm being abandoned and that adds to my sadness.

My life is forever changed and I need your support more than ever to find my way through this journey. Thank you for your love and support...



## Picking up the Pieces...Who am I Now?

After the immediate deluge of feeling that are associated with the death of a loved one begins to soften there is often a sense of what now, who am I now? And what am I going to do with the next \_\_\_\_ years to live productively now that my role/identity has changed.

To regain footing after loss, in any capacity, can be frightening. It can be a very slippery slope and after all, the role of caregiver, wife, husband, child, parent, or friend did not develop overnight, and neither will your new life. The comparison of being a fish out water or feeling like a half-person has been shared regularly to sum up how it feels to no longer be in your identifying role. The following are a few ideas to consider as you move forward on your path of healing after loss:

- Has my image of myself changed?
- Is there some behavior or realization about myself since my loss that has surprised me?
- How am I the same, how am I different?
- What activities do I want to embrace from either past interests or new ones?
- What is fulfilling for me to do?
- Is there an activity that I get completely absorbed into?
- Have I established new routines in daily living?
- Do I seek support for my journey?

I know that these are some very deep questions, and perhaps taking one at a time to reflect on and to journal about may provide some insights as you are picking up the pieces of your life after loss. Remember we are here to support you and invite you to join in on our bi-monthly bereavement support groups or contact us for more support opportunities. Dr. Karen



## Bereavement Support Groups

A Plus Hospice Care is here to support you through the loss of your loved one. Our Bereavement Program offers a variety of options tailored to give you the opportunity to choose the level and amount of bereavement care you wish to receive. We provide individual counseling sessions for family members whose loved ones have been on our service via in person visits, telephone, Zoom or FaceTime sessions as well as in person Bereavement Groups.

### Bereavement Support Group Dates

On the First and Third Tuesdays of the month we will provide an in-person open forum support group at our Reno Office located at 227 Vine St. from 1-2 pm.

**April: 4th and 18th      May: 2nd and 16th      June: 6th and 20th**

Please call our office at (775) 329-0900 or contact  
Dr. Karen at [karen@aplushospicecare.com](mailto:karen@aplushospicecare.com) for more information.



Like the character Ethan in Steinbeck's novel, *The Winter of Our Discontent*, grief can take us to darker places within ourselves that we never imagined existed. Yet if we dare to allow ourselves to stay connected to the natural cycle of life's seasons, we can indeed be brought back to Light, and eventually feel the fullness of the Joy and Goodness that our deceased loved one's life means to us.

As I grieved through the suicide of my brother when we were in our early forties, I was drawn to count the full moons as a promise to him that I would always remember him and share his story. Yet the depression that ensued for me was something I never expected. He died on the Saturday beginning Holy Week in 2006. To this day I can hear the primal sound I made when my dad called me to break the news of his death. It took the counting of 10 full moons before I remember the actual experience of feeling Joy, and laughing with friends, and not having a sense of guilt. It was February, the middle of winter, coming off of the great absence of the holiday season's 'firsts' without him. And somehow, feeling the warm sun on my face in the middle of a frosty aired outing with people I loved awakened me to life within me and around me. I stopped counting the full moons after my brother's death after about thirteen or fourteen cycles.

It took another several years before I stopped measuring my own life events as 'before he died' or 'after he died,' similar to the present time, how we might say, "this happened before the pandemic started," or "after the pandemic started." And so it is with the tears and heartbreak of our grief. Like the winter snows and howling winds, rains, and floods - our grief needs to be expressed so that it doesn't take root and wither us from within.

Today, in Northern Nevada, and throughout the country, we are moving through one of the most intense winters we have experienced in many decades. Yet on intermittent days of the Sun breaking through, the crocus and daffodils have come to remind us, Spring is coming – as if calling out to us, "We are here, we are here! We promise we will bloom for you!" And the cycle of grief moves through us in the same way, yet at different times and seasons for each of us. May we allow ourselves to welcome the buds of new life and joy when the Spring of our new content arises within us.

Rev. Terri Domitrovich, Chaplain, A Plus Hospice Care

## Suggested Reading Material

- *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis
- *Life After Life*, Raymond Moody
- *A Time to Grieve: Meditations for Healing After the Death of a Loved One*, Carol Staudacher
- *Beyond the Broken Heart: A Journey Through Grief*, Julie Yarbrough
- *Elegant Choices, Healing Choices*, Marsha Sinetar
- *Lessons of Loss: A Guide to Coping*, Kenneth Ring
- *Healing After Loss*, Martha Whitmor Hickman
- *The Four Things That Matter Most*, Ira Byock, MD
- *Hello from Heaven*, Bill and Judy Guggenheim
- *The Grace in Dying*, Kathleen Dowling Singh
- *I Can't Stop Crying*, John Martin
- *Understanding Your Grief*, Alan Wolfelt, PhD
- *The Grief Recovery Handbook*, John W. James & Russell Friedman