



## Dear Friends,

Re-creating your life after the loss of your loved one is difficult, to say the least. Change is not something that we often embrace even under the best of circumstances. It can be especially traumatic and very painful when forced upon us by loss. Change from significant loss requires great courage and finding a new strength that may be impossible to muster particularly when the loss is fresh. After all, your life has been dedicated to a much different purpose up until now. This kind of change requires one to find a certain level of peace in what has happened and faith in the future. Be patient with yourself and allow your inner desires to bubble up to the surface gently. Remember, you are still *you* even without your loved one. Maybe not the complete unit, but the half that you are is stronger than you think. Humans have a very strong natural survival instinct. You are a survivor, and the rest of your story depends on you.

Faith or hopefulness for the future can show up in surprising ways like rekindling old relationships, forming new ones, or engaging in old interests that were put aside long ago either by choice or necessity. Here are some tried and true ideas that have inspired others:

- Look up old friends or relatives to revive relationships. You may be surprised to learn that they have had changes in their lives as well and that you can support and accompany each other on this new path.
- Surround yourself with positive people that will give you encouragement. Sometimes stepping away from certain relationships that bring down your energy can give you a boost of self-confidence to move forward in grace.
- Seek out a spiritual community or deepen your participation in an established one.
- Take a class to inspire new growth. Cooking, gardening, art, journaling, meditation, health (maybe the athletic club is for you), sports, book studies, and many other interesting subjects are available online and in person. Classes can really get the juices flowing and they are a great way to meet new people with similar interests.
- Travel. Not for everyone, that's for sure, but if you have put off going to destinations that interest you maybe now is the time.
- Find opportunities to volunteer. There is something very satisfying and sacred about giving your time to those in need. Most folks who volunteer will agree that they get more from giving than they could imagine. It's a rewarding act of kindness that warms the heart.

If you are looking for a little direction in navigating any of these ideas, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [karen@aplushospicecare.com](mailto:karen@aplushospicecare.com) or 775-351-7346. I am delighted to help you find your best next step. Whatever the spark may be to start anew I hope that it brings a sense of purpose and joy to your heart. And remember, this is the beginning of the new you or as Paul Harvey would have said, "and...that is the rest of the story."

Blessings and Peace, Dr. Karen  
A Plus Hospice Care Director of Bereavement and Spiritual Care

# The Symptoms of Grief

The grieving process is a very personal journey and this uncharted territory can be confusing and very complicated. The following are some of the facets of grief that can be expected. Many times these symptoms can be overwhelming and generate a great deal of anxiety. Be gentle on yourself and seek support when needed.

## Physical

1. Disrupted sleeping patterns. Restlessness and/or extreme fatigue.
2. Tightness and/or pain in the chest, abdomen and throat. Headaches. Unable to breathe deeply.
3. Crying, deep sighing and a feeling of emptiness. A feeling of disconnectedness.
4. Appetite and weight change.

## Behavioral

1. Confusion, slowed responses, forgetfulness.
2. Sensing the loved one's presence in dreams and waking times.
3. Needing to tell the loved one's death story.

## Emotional

Abandonment • Anger • Anxiety • Apathy • Fear • Guilt • Irritability • Loneliness • Longing • Meaningless • Numbness • Relief • Sadness • Vulnerability

## Social

1. Lack of initiative and interest.
2. Withdrawal, avoiding friends and family and social interaction.
3. Deeply sensitive. Easily hurt by others words and actions.

**If you have any questions about the grieving process or are seeking bereavement support, please do not hesitate to contact me. Dr. Karen (775)351-7346**



## How long does grief last?

The length of the grief process is different for everyone. There is no predictable schedule for grief. Although it can be quite painful at times, the grief process should not be rushed.

It is important to be patient with yourself as you experience your unique reactions to your loss. Generally, with time, support and solid grief work, things really do get better.

However, it is normal for significant dates, holidays, or other reminders to trigger deep feelings related to your loss. Taking care of yourself, seeking support, and acknowledging your feelings during these times are ways that can help you cope. Remember grieving is a process and it takes as long as it takes. Trying to rush through can cause pain down the road. Take your time and heal well!

*"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



## 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 that is best for you. We provide individual counseling sessions for family members whose loved ones have been on our service as well as bereavement support groups and workshops. Our bereavement support groups and workshops are open to the community. All groups and workshops are held at the 227 Vine St. office. (775)329-0900

In Person Bereavement Support Groups: On the First and Third Tuesday of the month we will provide an in-person, open forum, support group at our Reno Office located at 227 Vine St., Reno from 1-2 pm.

**July 2nd and 16th**

**August 6th and 20th**

**September 3rd** **No group on September 17th-next group will be held on October 1st**



### *July Bereavement Workshop ... Message in a Bottle*

*Wednesday, July 24th at 1:00 pm*

*We will be creating beautiful hand decorated bottles to house very special messages for our loved ones who have crossed over to the other side of the river.*

*Historically messages in bottles have crossed the high seas and gone on some pretty wild adventures before coming to rest upon a distant shore. The mysterious journey of life can be looked at in this same way.*

*We hope that you will join us!*

### August Bereavement Workshop

**Wednesday, August 28th at 1:00pm**

**"Zen Doodle"** Finding peace and relaxation in freeform design! So, what is Zen doodling? Zen doodling is a series of unplanned shapes that come together to form an abstract expression of your inner creativity. It is simple, relaxing and a great tool for you to have in your bereavement tool box!



### **Grief Masks "A Window to the Soul"**

**Monday, September 30th at 1:00pm**

As people move through the bereavement process they often feel as though they are putting on a mask to hide their feelings and emotions from the world. When we wear masks, we are essentially creating a new language. A different form of communication to protect ourselves when we are feeling tender. It is a way of saying, "I'm fine" on the outside when really the inside feels quite different. In this workshop we will unmask our true feelings embracing both the good and hurting parts of ourselves.



# Broken Heart Syndrome

## Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy

Karen Turek, D.D., Ph.D.

I am often asked, "Has anyone ever died of a broken heart?" Unfortunately, the answer is "yes." But let me elaborate on my answer. Firstly, most all cases of broken heart syndrome are temporary and do not result in a permanent condition or death. The symptoms that are experienced are brought on by acutely stressful situations and extreme emotions such as the loss of a loved one, a serious accident, a sudden illness, a natural disaster or even an unexpected positive event that causes shock.

Broken heart syndrome is often referred to as cardiomyopathy, takotsubo cardiomyopathy (Tako tsubo are Japanese octopus traps that resemble the pot-like shape which the stricken heart temporarily takes on) or apical ballooning syndrome. It is believed to be brought about by a sudden rush of surging stress hormones that "stun" the heart. This causes a temporary ballooning of the left ventricle. The stress induced characteristics of broken heart syndrome are rarely fatal but need to be addressed by a medical professional immediately. This is nothing to excuse, or ignore, as a self-diagnosed temporary condition. It is real and the symptoms can lead to short-term heart muscle failure that resembles a heart attack. I always suggest to the newly bereaved that they see their primary physician after the loss of a loved one, even if they feel physically well, to inform the doctor of their loss and to get a wellness check. The effects of stress can be fatal!

The most common symptoms that are experienced are: chest pain and shortness of breath. I have also had folks, mostly women by the way, that describe the feeling of an invisible band wrapped around their chest that constricts breathing. A familiar statement is, "I just can't get a deep breath." I have pointed out that a common response to shock, or acute stress, is for someone to actually hold their breath. Completely unaware of what they are doing, a simple cue to "breathe" is often enough to bring awareness and return to a normal breathing rhythm.

Awareness is the best preventative medicine for many conditions and I encourage you to visit The Mayo Clinic and/or Johns Hopkins University websites to read their articles about broken heart syndrome.

Stay well, stay safe, stay informed. And...don't forget to stay in touch! -Dr. Karen

**May the sun bring you new energy by day.  
May the moon softly restore you by night.  
May the rain wash away your worries.  
May the breeze blow new strength into your being.  
May you walk gently through the world  
and know its beauty all the days of your life. -Apache Blessing-**