

Hello, Friends,

We had another great turnout at the meeting and met a couple of new faces. We covered a lot of topics and had some interesting discussions.

- **Monthly luncheons.** The group decided to keep meeting for lunch and not do breakfast (as had been suggested). These lunches will remain every **fourth Friday of each month at 11:30**, but the location will vary. **This month's luncheon will be at Yummy House, 500 SW College Rd Ste 400, Ocala, FL 34474.** If you haven't already signed up, please let me know as soon as you can so I can give the restaurant an accurate count. Likewise, if your plans change, let me know so I can take your name off the list.
- **Vendor List.** I'm still seeking people to add to our list of used and approved vendors. If you have anyone who does work for you that you could recommend, please let me know. I'll include them on the list. My goal is to reprint and distribute this list in the next month or so.
- **Meeting Handouts.** Sometimes I get requests for copies of handouts that have been distributed at prior meetings. I've collected these in a notebook and will bring them to meetings from time to time for those who might want copies. They are also available on the website on the Members' Page in the section that has all the meeting summaries. You can access these and print them yourself. I am also working on a series of Tip Sheets to make available. These would cover things like the Seco refund, how and when to care for your HVAC and other helpful tips. More on that as I get it developed.
- **Handouts.** The two attached handouts illustrate the needs of the grieving process and the importance of the mind/body connection in that process. A number of members shared their thoughts and experiences in various stages of grieving. We recognize the importance of finding purpose, staying mentally and physically active, and socializing to cope with grief, but how to achieve these goals are sometime the hardest part. Sharing with this group can hopefully help us find our way.
- **Safety.** We discussed being aware of our surroundings, cautious of strangers, and how to live alone safely and without fear. Several members suggested arrangements with neighbors to either text/email each other every day or read signals such as opening/closing blinds to communicate that everything is okay, and they've made it to another sunrise. Having a neighbor or friend that knows to check on you if you haven't sent the all-clear signal can be helpful and comforting.

Announcements:

- I will be starting a part-time job this month, working afternoons at Central Florida College. They are going to work with me on my commitment to Suddenly One, but in the event this becomes a problem, I will look into scheduling our meetings at an earlier time. For now, nothing will change. I will work to keep our group going at a time that is convenient for the majority of members.
- If you need to talk with me about something that you'd rather not discuss in the group, please see me either 15 minutes before the meeting or after it adjourns.
- If you know of someone who is struggling with their grief and you are concerned about their overuse of drugs or alcohol, please let me know. We have members who can help with this and anything you share will remain confidential.

The next meeting will be **March 10th** in the Card Room at 10:30.

"There is no better way to fight old age than by refusing to act the part."

Shelley

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THE SIX NEEDS OF MOURNING

Adapted from Alan Wolfelt

Understanding Your Grief: 10 Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart.

NEED 1 | Acknowledge the Reality of the Death

Gently confront the reality that someone you loved has died and will not return. A support group can provide an opportunity for members to tell their stories, and to move from head to heart in embracing the reality and impact of the death.

NEED 2 | Move Toward the Pain of the Loss

Bereaved people need to find a balanced approach to grief, moving both “toward” and “away” from grief. A grief group is one place members are encouraged to move “toward” their grief, exploring the broad range of thoughts and feelings that accompany loss.

NEED 3 | Remember the Person Who Died

Grief theorists are shifting the dialogue from ideas about closure and “moving on” from grief to the idea of continued bonds with the person who died. Mourners are encouraged to discover a different kind of relationship with the person who died – one that is based on precious memories, the presence of objects and photos that recall the person who died, conversations about dreams and legacies the bereaved person hopes to continue in his/her loved one’s honor, letters or journal entries written to the deceased, and so on.

NEED 4 | Develop a New Self-Identity

With a significant loss, come changes in self-identity and the role a person plays in life. Grief group participants have gone from being wives/husbands to widows or widowers. Support groups help meet this need by allowing members to talk out their thoughts on these identity changes and explore the adjustment with others in similar situations.

NEED 5 | Search for Meaning

It is common for group members to struggle with “why?” questions about death: why did this happen? Why now? Why in this way? Bereavement groups provide a safe, non-judgmental place in which to ask these questions, and make meaning of the loss. Participants may also broaden the question from why?” to “how? How can I best care for myself? Where do I go from here? How will I create new purposes?

NEED 6 | Continue to Receive Support from Others

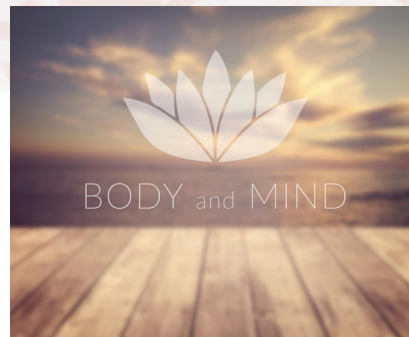
Grief is an ongoing process that unfolds over the course of many years. Sometimes participants express a desire to continue to meet after the sessions are complete. Continuing as a group can take many forms such as continued emotional support, meeting for meals or coffee, or pursuing activities of interest (yoga, book club, for example). Some groups do not wish to continue together and may benefit from a list of community support for social and recreation activities.



GRIEF AND THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION

Grief is an all-encompassing physical, social, psychological, biological, and spiritual experience

It is important to be aware of the connection between our mind and body as we process grief. A grieving heart can feel heavy and often cause physical symptoms that can be mistaken for illness. A racing mind can lead to sleepless nights aiding in the physical exhaustion that grief often presents. Educating ourselves and others in this mind-body connection is important in supporting our overall wellness.



What causes these physical symptoms?

A range of studies reveal the powerful effects grief can have on the body.

- Grief increases inflammation, which can worsen existing health problems and lead to new ones.
- Grief can take a toll on the immune system, making one more vulnerable to infection.
- Intense grief can alter the heart muscle so much that it causes "broken heart syndrome," a form of heart disease with the same symptoms as a heart attack.
- The "heartbreak" of grief can increase blood pressure and the risk of blood clots.
- Emotional stress can activate the nervous system as easily as physical threats can. When stress becomes chronic, increased adrenaline and blood pressure can contribute to chronic medical conditions.
- Research shows that emotional pain triggers the same areas of the brain as physical pain.
- Grievers often experience sad thoughts and feelings and typically occur in waves or bursts of grief followed by periods of respite, as opposed to the more persistent experience of major depression which can cause fatigue, a weakened immune system and increased inflammation.

What can we do to maintain our health?

- Find and maintain social support and connections as much as possible
- Self-acceptance and leaning in and out of grief when appropriate
- Find joy amidst the grief
- Implement good self-care measures; fall back on ones that have worked in the past, but be open to trying new ones as well
- Physical activity; simple walks and general movement
- Fresh air, sunlight and Vitamin D. Soak up all that the outdoors offers!
- Maintain basic health practices as much as possible; proper sleep, nutrition, vitamins
- Meditation and quiet personal time
- Periods of rest and relaxation; leaning into what feels good instead of a "must-do" list
- Practice mindfulness and trying not to let anxiety and ruminative thinking set in
- Foundational faith and spiritual practices
- Tell people that it is OK to not be OK and that space might be needed at times
- Accept encouragement and communication from loved ones and allow them to do the relationship work to minimize personal physical and emotional exhaustion



Our Mission: The Center for Loss and Bereavement is a non-profit resource of specialized knowledge and professional support that provides meaningful connection and restorative guidance for those impacted by grief. Our Vision is for all facing loss to find solace and renewed strength while investing in life.