

Hello, friends,

This July meeting marked one year since I started Suddenly One. I created the group not knowing what to expect, but I can honestly say it wasn't this. My worries last year about whether anyone would show up at all seem to have been unfounded. We had 20 people at the first meeting and continue to maintain many original members and gain new members each month. Our average attendance at meetings is around 25, and sometimes over 30. To all of those who came to the very first meeting and are still coming, I thank you. To our newer members who have only recently heard about us, or only recently needed us, I say thank you for checking us out. I hope you find something useful and continue to participate. I appreciate all of you. Those who were in attendance on July 8 received a packet of wildflower seeds to plant in remembrance of their lost ones and to commemorate one year of Suddenly One.

After welcoming guests, we continued our discussion of the Vial of Life options. At a future meeting (probably August and/or September) we will have available Vial of Life kits for each of you to purchase at cost. I am researching various kinds and trying to find the most efficient and best value. By ordering in bulk, I hope to save us all some money.

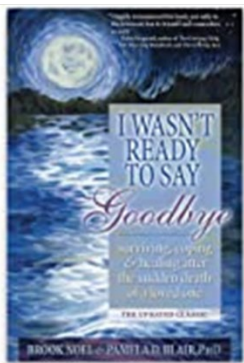
In conjunction with the Vial of Life project, Kathylee and I will research wearable personal protection/medical alert options. These range from possibly free (who doesn't like free?) to about \$20 per month for a subscription service. Some will add fall detection for an additional fee. We hope to have more information at a future meeting, but until then, we have a link to some excellent information here:

[Medical Alert Systems | Resources, Reviews, and News](#)

We circulated a list that Bettye Wilcox is working on for members of our group who would like to get together for card or board games, day trips and other activities. This would be geared for our members; you will not have to join other Oak Run clubs. I will give the completed list to Bettye who will help to organize the various groups.

I am also attaching some handouts I adapted from a website you might find helpful: [Grief - Center for Loss & Life Transition](#). The main point I took away from some of the readings on this site was the differentiation between grief and mourning. The author describes grief as what you feel and carry inside after a death. Mourning is what you show to the outside world. This was a new perspective for me. We know that mourning usually has a traditional time period, depending on your beliefs and culture, but grief never ends. When others no longer see your outward indications of mourning, they may assume your grief is over. Perhaps knowing the difference between the two will help to move through the process.

Ingrid has once again suggested a book to help us through our journey: *I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye: Surviving, Coping and Healing After the Sudden Death of a Loved One (A Compassionate Grief Recovery Book)* by Brook Noel and Pamala D. Blair. I have ordered a copy and I will bring it to the next meeting for someone else to borrow. Otherwise, it is available at Amazon.com or possibly the local library.



Excerpt from the book:

"You cannot explain the impact of tragic death to someone who has not experienced it firsthand. You cannot understand the challenges until you have faced them. You cannot explain the questioning, the disorientation, the helplessness that arises when facing the world without your loved one."

(continued)

A reminder that we have set up a monthly lunch at the Oak Room Grill for the **4th Friday of each month at 11:30**. The next lunch is **July 22nd**. If you did not sign up at the meeting and want to go, please call Shelley before July 21. Likewise, if you signed up and can't make it please let me know so I can give the club an accurate count. **Please put these Fridays on your calendar.**

The latest membership roster is attached. For those of you who don't have email addresses, Ingrid Crane will deliver this message and any attachments to your home. *If you don't plan to return to the group, or don't want to receive this information, please let me know, and I'll remove you from the list.*

Thank you, and I hope to see you next month on **August 12th in the card room.**

Shelley
210-410-0090



THE MOURNER'S BILL OF RIGHTS

by Alan Wolfelt, PhD
Excerpted from
www.centerforloss.com

1. You have the right to experience your own unique grief.

No one else will grieve exactly as you do. Don't allow others to tell you what you should or shouldn't feel.

2. You have the right to talk about your grief.

Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk about your grief.

3. You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions.

There is no such thing as a "wrong" emotion. Accept all your feelings.

4. You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.

Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Don't get pushed into doing things you aren't ready for.

5. You have the right to experience "griefbursts."

Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This is normal and natural.

6. You have the right to make use of rituals.

Maintaining rituals at home for a period of time can help. Light a candle, set the extra place at the table,

7. You have the right to embrace your spirituality.

If faith is a part of your life, express it and be around people who understand and support your beliefs.

8. You have the right to search for meaning.

You have the right to ask "Why? Why now?" and you do not have to accept clichéd answers.

9. You have the right to treasure your memories.

Memories are the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. Embrace them.

10. You have the right to move toward your grief and heal.

Grief is a process, not an event. The death of your loved one changes your life forever. Be patient and tolerant with yourself and avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you.

The Journey Through Grief: The Six Needs of Mourning

by Alan Wolfelt, PhD

Excerpted from www.centerforloss.com



The death of someone loved changes our lives forever. And the movement from the “before” to the “after” is almost always a long, painful journey. If we are to heal, we cannot skirt the outside edges of our grief. Instead, we must journey all through it, sometimes meandering the side roads, sometimes plowing directly into its raw center. The journey requires mourning. There is an important difference, you see. Grief is what you think and feel on the inside after someone you love dies. Mourning is the outward expression of those

thoughts and feelings. To mourn is to be an active participant in our grief journeys. There are six “yield signs” you are likely to encounter on your journey through grief—what I call the “reconciliation needs of mourning.” For while your grief journey will be an intensely personal, unique experience, all mourners must yield to this set of basic human needs if they are to heal.

Need 1: Acknowledging the reality of the death

This first need of mourning involves gently confronting the reality that someone you care about will never physically come back into your life again. To survive, you may try to push away the reality of the death at times. You may discover yourself replaying events surrounding the death and confronting memories, both good and bad. This replay is a vital part of this need of mourning. Remember—this first need of mourning may intermittently require your attention for months. Be patient and compassionate with yourself as you work on each of them.

Need 2: Embracing the pain of the loss

This need of mourning requires us to embrace the pain of our loss—something we naturally don’t want to do. It is easier to avoid, repress or deny the pain of grief than it is to confront it, yet it is in confronting our pain that we learn to reconcile ourselves to it. You cannot (nor should you) overload yourself with the hurt all at one time. Sometimes you may need to distract yourself from the pain of death, while at other times you will need to create a safe place to move toward it. Our culture tends to encourage the denial of pain. Doing well with your grief means becoming well acquainted with your pain.

Need 3: Remembering the person who died

Do you have a relationship with someone after they die? Of course. You have a relationship of memory. Precious memories, dreams, objects that link you to the person are examples of some of the things that give testimony to a different form of a continued relationship. This need of mourning involves allowing yourself to pursue this relationship. Trying to be helpful, some people may encourage you to take down all the photos of the person who died. They tell you to keep busy or even to move out of your house. But remembering the past makes hoping for the future possible. Your future will become open to new experiences only to the extent that you embrace the past.

Need 4: Developing a new self-identity

Part of your self-identity comes from the relationships you have with other people. When someone with whom you have a relationship dies, the way you see yourself, naturally changes. The way society defines you is changed. A death often requires you to take on new roles. You confront your changed identity every time you do something that used to be done by the person who died. This can be very hard work and can leave you feeling very drained. You may experience feelings of helplessness, frustration, inadequacy and fear. Many people discover that as they work on this need, they discover some positive aspects of their changed self-identity. You may develop a renewed confidence in yourself, or a more caring, kind and sensitive part of yourself. You may develop an assertive part of your identity that empowers you to go on living even though you continue to feel a sense of loss.

Need 5: Searching for meaning

When someone you love dies, you naturally question the meaning and purpose of life. You probably will question your philosophy of life and explore religious and spiritual values as you work on this need. You may discover yourself searching for meaning in your continued living as you ask “How?” and “Why” questions.

“How could God let this happen?” “Why did this happen now, in this way?” The death reminds you of your lack of control. It can leave you feeling powerless. The person who died was a part of you. This death means you mourn a loss not only outside of yourself, but inside of yourself as well. At times, overwhelming sadness and loneliness may be your constant companions. You may feel that when this person died, part of you died with him or her. And now you are faced with finding some meaning in going on with your life even though you may often feel so empty. This death also calls for you to confront your own spirituality. You may doubt your faith and have spiritual conflicts and questions racing through your head and heart. This is normal and part of your journey toward renewed living.

Need 6: Receiving ongoing support from others

The quality and quantity of understanding support you get during your grief journey will have a major influence on your capacity to heal. You cannot—nor should you try to—do this alone. Drawing on the experiences and encouragement of friends, fellow mourners or professional counselors is not a weakness but a healthy human need. And because mourning is a process that takes place over time, this support must be available months and even years after the death of someone in your life. Unfortunately, because our society places so much value on the ability to “carry on,” “keep your chin up” and “keep busy,” many mourners are abandoned shortly after the event of the death. Obviously, these messages encourage you to deny or repress your grief rather than express it. To be truly helpful, the people in your support system must appreciate the impact this death has had on you. They must understand that in order to heal, you must be allowed—even encouraged—to mourn long after the death. And they must encourage you to see mourning not as an enemy to be vanquished but as a necessity to be experienced as a result of having loved.

Reconciling your grief

You may have heard that your grief journey’s end will come when you resolve, or recover from, your grief. But your journey will never end. People do not “get over” grief. Reconciliation is a term I find more appropriate for what occurs as the mourner works to integrate the new reality of moving forward in life without the physical presence of the person who died. With reconciliation comes a renewed sense of energy and confidence, an ability to fully acknowledge the reality of the death and a capacity to become reinvolved in the activities of living. In reconciliation, the sharp, ever-present pain of grief gives rise to a renewed sense of meaning and purpose. Your feelings of loss will not completely disappear, yet they will soften, and the intense pangs of grief will become less frequent. Hope for a continued life will emerge as you are able to make commitments to the future, realizing that the person who died will never be forgotten, yet knowing that your life can and will move forward.