

Calendar of Upcoming Events

- Oct. 11 Compassionate Friends Support Group for families who have experienced the death of a child, 7 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie; Nancy Renner, facilitator
- Oct. 14 Thursday Night Grief Support Group, 6:30 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie Meeting Room; Jerry Hodges, facilitator
- Oct. 19 Men's Grief Seminar & Supper, 6:00 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie Meeting Room; Jerry Hodges, facilitator
- Oct. 20 Bereavement Luncheon, 12 noon, Inn Pancake House, 1610 W. Wyatt Earp, Dodge City; Dick Robbins, host
- Oct. 28 Thursday Night Grief Support Group, 6:30 p.m., Hospice of the Prairie Meeting Room; Jerry Hodges, facilitator

BEREAVEMENT NEWSLETTER is a publication of Hospice of the Prairie, Inc., 200 Fourth Circle., Dodge City, KS 67801, (620) 227-7209, www.hospiceoftheprairie.com. Please help us keep our printing and mailing costs down by notifying us if your address has changed or you no longer wish to be on our newsletter list.

Helping kids through loss

Hospice of the Prairie will offer children's grief groups in local schools this fall. "Adventure in the Land of Grief" is a 5-session after school group that uses games, activities and imagination to help children learn to cope with the loss of someone close to them or a life changing event. They will learn about the concepts of grief, explore their own feelings about loss and learn the importance of keeping good memories. The group is a community service of Hospice of the Prairie and is free of charge.

Hospice of the Prairie also offers grief groups for teens and pre-teens. If you would like to have a group at your child's school, please call Nancy Renner at Hospice of the Prairie at 227-7209



Bereavement Newsletter

October 2010

200 Fourth Circle • Dodge City, KS

Tel: (620) 227-7209 • Fax: (620) 227-7429

Understanding Different Mourning Patterns in Your Family Part 2

Suggestions for Coping with Different Mourning Patterns:

If the Mourner is a Child:

- Recognize that death and loss are natural parts of living; shielding children from grief is futile and gives them no role models to learn healthy, normal coping behaviors.
- Be open and meticulously honest. Children know when adults are shading the truth. If children discover that you've distorted the truth or lied to them, they'll have a great deal of trouble trusting you again.
- First find out what the children already know or think they know about dying and death.
- Validate feelings and encourage children to share their thoughts, fears and observations about what has happened.
- Offer explanations that are age appropriate and at the child's level of understanding. A child under age five needs comfort and support rather than detailed explanations, whereas a child over age five needs information that is simple, accurate, plain and direct.
- Explain that in the circle of life all living things will die someday, and that death causes changes in a living thing.
- Help children understand what "dead" means (that the body stops working and won't work anymore) and that death is not the same as

sleeping (that the sleeping body is still working, but just resting).

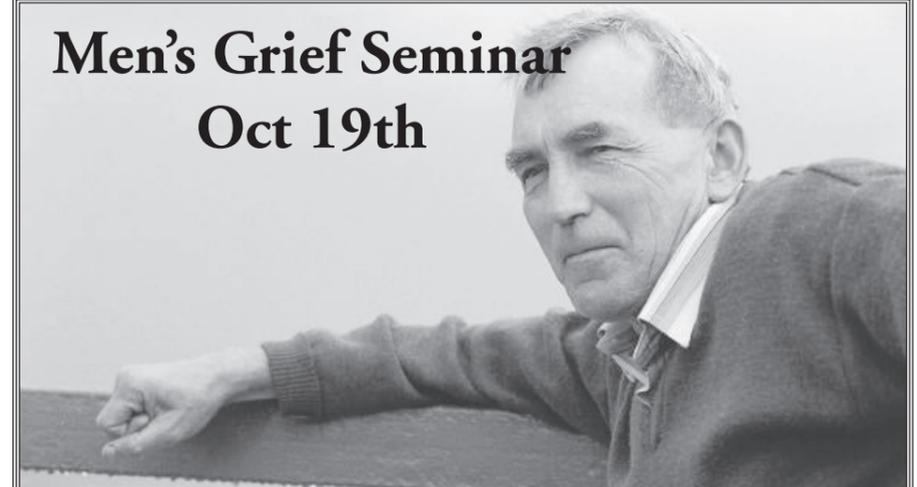
- Don't use confusing or misleading euphemisms such as "passed away," "lost," or "gone on." Such phrases imply the one who died is on a trip and will return, leave children feeling rejected or abandoned, or encourage them to go searching for the individual or hold out hope for his or her return.
- Explain how we might feel when someone dies: sad, mad, or confused – and we may cry sometimes. Let your children know that laughing and playing are still okay, too, and that you respect their need to be children at this sad and difficult time.
- Relieve the child of any feelings of

responsibility for the death; magical thinking may lead a child to conclude that something s/he did, wished or imagined somehow caused the death.

- Avoid telling children that the dead person was so good or so special that God wants him or her to be with Him in heaven. Children may become angry with God or fear that they (or you) will be chosen next.
- Respect and encourage your children's needs to express and share feelings of sadness. When you bring up the subject, you're showing your own willingness to talk about it. When in doubt about your children's thoughts and feelings, ask.

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Men's Grief Seminar Oct 19th



Hospice of the Prairie will host a Men's Seminar and Supper this fall. This special event will take place Tuesday, October 19 at 6:00 p.m. and will be facilitated by Jerry Hodges, Grief Specialist. Those attending will enjoy a great meal and learn ways to cope with the unique issues that men face after the loss of a friend or family member. Please pre-register by contacting Nancy Renner at 227-7209 or 1-800-227-7209.

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Understanding Different Mourning Patterns in Your Family Part 2

- Don't feel as if you must have all the answers; sometimes just listening is enough. Expect that young children will ask and need answers to the same questions over and over again.

- Find and read some of the many wonderful stories and books written especially for children to help them better understand death and grief.

- Don't cut off their feelings by noting how well your children are handling their grief or how brave or strong they are. Let them see you upset and crying, which implies that it's all right to cry for those we love and lose.

- Children and adolescents may be reluctant to express their thoughts and feelings verbally. Encourage them to express their grief and preserve their memories in a variety of ways, including art, music, journal writing, story-telling and picture collecting.

- Let children and adolescents plan and participate in commemorative family rituals.

If the Mourner is an Adolescent:

- Recognize that teens are already struggling with the enormous physical and psychological changes and pressures of adolescence. No longer children, but not yet mature adults, they still need adult supervision, guidance, and consistent, compassionate support.

- Don't deprive teens of their own need to mourn by pressuring them to "be strong" in support of a surviving parent, younger siblings or other family members.

- Understand that teens don't like to stand out and feel different from their friends; they want to belong, and normally turn to one another for support. But if a teen's friends have never experienced the death of a loved one, it's unlikely that they can fully understand what the bereaved adolescent is feeling or experiencing. Grieving teens do best when they're helped to connect with other teens who have also experienced a death.

- Assure adolescents that conflict in relationships between teens and adults is a normal part of growing up, and of-



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fer them every opportunity to vent their feelings about their relationship with the person who died. Teens striving to separate from authority figures and find their own identity normally feel somewhat alienated from parents, siblings, and other family members, and if a loved one dies during this turbulent time, they can be left with feelings of guilt and unfinished business.

- Give teenagers permission not to be grieving all the time. If they've expressed their feelings and talked about the loss with others (family, friends, teachers and other helpers) it may not be useful for them to focus further on their loss. It's not disloyal of them to want to put their grief aside and enjoy life again.

- Be on the alert for signs that a teen may need extra help (depression; drastic changes in sleeping or eating habits; falling grades; substance abuse; sexual acting out; deteriorating relationships with family and friends).

- Children and adolescents will cope only as well as the adults around them; helping yourself will help your children.

- Alert significant adults in your child or adolescent's life (family doctor, teachers, school counselor, caregivers, neighbors, relatives, friends) about the death in your family. Ask their help in keeping a watchful eye on your youngster, and ask for their additional support and understanding during this difficult time.

- Consider enrolling your child or adolescent in one of the children/family bereavement support groups offered by Hospice of the Prairie.

Watch for Part 3 of "Understanding Different Mourning Patterns in Your Family" in next month's newsletter.

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Mail to: tousley@aol.com

Grief at School

With a new school year beginning, it's a good time to think about how the recent loss in your family may affect your child's ability to perform in the classroom. The following are common emotional and cognitive characteristics of a grieving child.

Forgetfulness. Students may forget school assignments, book reports or backpacks at home. Help your child establish routines and develop schedules. Remind them to write down important things.

Disorganization. It may take a grieving child an hour to do what previously took 15 minutes.

Inability to concentrate. Do not be surprised to hear of your child "day-dreaming" in class. It may be hard for them to stay focused; their grades may suffer for a while.

Inability to retain information. Inform teachers and counselors at your child's school about the loss and your child's response to the loss. Ask your child to read "out loud" to you instead of to themselves. Encourage your child to complete homework in 20 minute segments with 5 minute breaks.

Lack of interest or motivation. Even if they are doing something they love, kids may be unable to think about anything except the loss. Caution them to be careful to avoid a "why bother" attitude. Help them use their grief experiences to reach out to help others.

Lowered tolerance level and increased impatience. Grieving kids may be impatient, especially if someone else complains about something they think is trivial, i.e., "bad hair day." Talk with them about how not to take grief out on other people.

Although it's important to be aware of the affects of grief on kids, adults must also make it clear that they are expected to continue to function. Grieving children generally cope well when they have the support of adults who can help them maintain routine and structure to their day.

Establish good communication with your child. Talk with them at home about their grief and share your feelings about the loss. Expressing these feelings with family may free up their minds to concentrate more at school.

Give your child a journal to write thoughts and feelings about their loss that they may not want to share with others.

If you would like to talk to a grief counselor about your or your child's loss or if you would like written information on grief, please contact Nancy Renner at 227-7209 or 1-800-466-7209.

*Courage does not always roar.
Sometimes courage is the small voice
at the end of the day that says:
I will try again tomorrow.*

-Anonymous

Embracing Autumn

Weep not for the days of spring
Sweet as they were

Long gone, but not forgotten
Nor for the languid days of
Summer

Warm and somnolent
Seductive and serene
Embrace the cooler
Bracing days of autumn

Hold your loved ones closely
And save the sweetness of
Foreshortened time
Live each moment to its fullness

Take all that you have become
Throughout the years

And sip it gratefully
as a well-aged wine

Summon your strength
And burst into autumnal
Radiance

Celebrating the gift of
Your unique life
And sacred creativity

Leave a lovely legacy for
Those you love and leave behind
Knowing you will be
Forever with them

When all is done lie
down
In winter's
Whiteness, absolute
peace

And take your
well-deserved rest.

-author unknown

