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Winter 2009

H.O.P.E.

Helping Overcome and Provide Encouragement

Dear Friends,

Here are some grief recovery resolutions and intentions to help the healing process as a new year begins:

Each day, I will . . .

- Remember to live in the present. The past is gone; the future is uncertain. All I have is today and I will make the most of it.
- I will open my heart asking God (or the Universe or a Higher Power) to help me heal.
- Remind myself that every day is a healing day.
- Do the best I can for my own good.
- Do the best I can for the good of others.
- Count my blessings, remembering that my cup is always half full and never half empty.
- Avoid setting unreasonable, perfectionist goals for myself.
- Nurture my spirit through prayer, meditation, worship, inspirational readings.
- Take care of my physical self by eating nutritious, balanced meals and by engaging in physical exercise.



- Believe that "help" is not a four-letter word; that asking for assistance with various issues is both mature and wise.
- Choose to respond positively and creatively to problems which come my way.
- Seek out all resources to find relief for my sorrow.
- Not indulge in guilt and regrets because they don't change anything.
- Maintain hope believing that the light always dispels the deepest darkness.
- Trust that the pain will pass and peace will come.
- Get the support I need.
- Forgive myself for being human and fallible.
- Forgive others for being human and fallible.
- Find role models to inspire me on my journey through bereavement.
- Be kind, compassionate and generous toward others.
- Practice patience with myself because healing and recovery take time.
- Grow from this experience.
- Allow myself to feel good again.



LESSONS FROM AN INSPIRING WIDOW

For 77 years Marge Jetton was happily married to her physician husband. She was proud to be identified as "the doctor's wife" and found meaning supporting his work. It all ended when he died suddenly. Mrs. Jetton grieved for several months, then regrouped and returned to the business of living. She began by volunteering at her church. Then she worked as a fund raiser for a religious radio program. In her spare time, she delivered used magazines to elderly hospital patients.

"I realized the world wasn't going to come to me, so I went back out into the world," she says. "I reconnected with old friends and felt satisfaction from helping the community. I guess you could say that I recharged my purpose batteries."

At the time she made those statements, Mrs. Jetton was 96 years of age. At 104 she was actively involved in her community believing fervently that as long as she's around, she could find creative ways to make a difference.

TO WHOM DO YOU TALK?

This question is raised by Dr. Bill Flatt in his book *Growing Through Grief*. He notes the common tendency will be to reach out to any person who indicates a willingness to listen. However, he cautions against this saying: “You should choose a confidant with some care. After all, during conversations in a time of grief, you’ll be expressing deep feelings and perhaps also intimate confidences.” Dr. Flatt suggests three qualities to look for in a confidant.

1) *Someone who is non judgmental.*

“You need to find someone who will be a true friend, who will let you speak your mind without interrupting and without judging.”

2) *Someone who can keep a confidence.*

“You need the assurance that the person with whom you share your deep feelings isn’t going to be spreading them to anyone else. Simply put, you want a person you can trust.”

3) *Someone who is not only sympathetic but also empathetic.*

This is a person who feels both sadness over your loss and also can feel with you as you relive the experience. “Perhaps the most helpful listener you can find is someone who has already gone through the grief you’re now experiencing. Such a person not only feels bad *for* you, but also feels bad *with* you because he has been through the same thing and knows what the feelings and thoughts are like first hand. This friend can offer insights into your situation that may take you much longer to find on your own. Later, you can be this same type of friend for someone else.”



“HOW CAN I BEST HEAL AFTER A LOSS?”

One of the most common questions asked in grief workshops is: “How can I best heal after a loss?” or similarly, “What steps can I take to facilitate recovery?” Here are some guidelines to help you heal a little more quickly and more completely.

✓ **Hold fast to this truth:** *no matter how much pain you may feel, you will survive your loss.*

✓ **Expect emotional confusion.**

Grief brings a variety of confusing and even conflicting emotions - anger, frustration, sadness, depression, loneliness, fear, vulnerability, etc. Emotional swings are normal during a time of grief.

✓ **Don’t speed through grief.**

It’s unhealthy to speed up or avoid the grief process. Doing so only results in an incomplete bereavement with residue left over which may linger over your life. There is a paradox in grief: in order to get through the pain, we must first feel and experience the pain.

✓ **Avoid major changes.**

This is not the time to sell your home, move, take a new job, make new investments. Unless absolutely essential, the best course of action is to take no major actions during the first twelve months of grieving.

✓ **Don’t do this all alone.**

Surround yourself with a few kind, compassionate people who will be available when you need to talk or when you just need some company. You don’t have to face this alone so be sure to invite some people into your grieving process.

✓ **Be gentle, kind, patient with yourself.**

It takes time to fully absorb the impact of a major loss. You may never stop missing your loved one, but the pain eases after time and you will go on with your life.