

Our Quarterly Newsletter

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H.O.P.E.

Helping Overcome and Provide Encouragement

Dear Friends,

10. I will claim my right and need to grieve.

I will not allow others to minimize or deny my grief when they say... "You can have other children." "Your father lived to a ripe old age, why be so sad." "This was the will of God." "She's in a better place now." I will recognize that the people making these statements just don't realize the comments are ways of minimizing my loss. I will allow myself to grieve.

9. I will monitor what I eat and drink. Nutrition is always important especially during a time of grief. Fresh fruit, vegetables, grains will be a vital part of my meals. Water, tea and fresh squeezed juice will further nourish my body. Alcohol and soft drinks will be used moderately, if at all.

8. I will exercise. Grieving is stressful to body, mind and spirit. Exercise offsets much of that stress leaving me feeling better physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I will engage in physical activity – walking, biking, swimming, yoga, pilates, etc. - whatever works best for my body.

7. I will feel my feelings. There are many confusing and conflicting ones: anger, denial, despair, guilt, regret, disappointment, frustration, exhaustion. Rather than judge and condemn what I'm feeling I will do my best to simply let them flow. And, rather than act upon those feelings or give in to them, I will try to be a detached observer of what I'm feeling.

6. I will make a study of grief. This will mean trips to the library to collect books about bereavement. It will mean visiting a bookstore to purchase books on grief topics. I will read them carefully, absorbing insights to inform my own journey through grief. The knowledge will empower me.

The top 10 grief recovery resolutions for a new year:

5. I will do what I need for myself. Grief is a tremendous life upheaval. Therefore I will pace myself and do things which feel right at the moment such as giving myself a quiet evening to read, being in the company of an understanding friend, spending time alone, going on a trip, working at a hobby.

4. I will nurture my spiritual self. This could include going on a weekend retreat, spending time in nature, practicing yoga, engaging in meditation and prayer, reading spiritual books and studying religious texts, participating with a faith community.

3. I will ask for advice when I need it. This shouldn't be hard but many find it so. If I have a legal question, I'll check with a lawyer. If I have an insurance question, I'll call an agent. If I have a car problem, I'll ask a mechanic. If I have medical questions, I'll check in with my physician.

2. I will compile a list of tasks for people who say "let me know if there's anything I can do." Yes, there are a lot of areas where I could use some help: maintaining the property, being driven to an airport, being picked up at an airport, preparing my home for winter or spring.

1. I will not be the lone ranger. While most of us want to be independent, there are times when going it alone is going nowhere. Grief is one of those times. The truth is we need to be with others who share our life experience. This year I will commit to joining a grief support group. I will place myself in the presence of women and men who can guide me, offer their insights, provide me with ongoing support and encouragement.



QUICK WAYS TO HELP A GRIEVING FRIEND

Be a good listener. Our grieving friend needs people to talk about what has happened. Give him or her that time.

Be available. His is especially true right after the death, during the

holidays and other special days when loss is felt most deeply.

Help out ...with errands, household tasks, yard work, professional advice if you're qualified.

Offer invitations or a morning coffee, a late afternoon tea. These are inexpensive ways to show you care. They also will get your friend out of the house for an hour or two.

A GRATITUDE STORY THAT WARMS THE HEART

A single mother with three children wrote a short article published in a newspaper thanking people who provided encouragement. Their support was vitally important to her and the children during some dark, difficult days.

"Thank you to the grocer who cashed the occasional support checks I received from my ex-husband and held the ones that bounced until I could make them good. Thank you to the parents who took my children with them on vacations I never could afford, even though I worked full time while holding down several part-time jobs. Thank you to the doctor and the dentist who charged me less than their regular rates for my children. Thank you to my principal for paying me to paint the interior of his house so I could buy groceries during the last three weeks of summer before school resumed. Thank you to the farmers who hired my sons to clean their chicken coops and help with harvesting their hay crops. What you paid them was their only spending money."

That single mother concluded her letter saying: "It has been more than 20 years since you opened your hearts to my children and me, but if you could see the two lawyers and PhD chemist they became, you'd know we did a good job with the kids."

Among the lessons to be gleaned in her experience are these:

1. Accept help and assistance whenever it is offered.
2. Even though you may feel alone, try to remind yourself that we are all interconnected. There are people who know you, see you, care about you and want to help you.
3. Count your blessings. Re-read this woman's words. Count up all the blessings she received. Take an inventory of your own life and count up your blessings.



SURE-FIRE WAYS TO BEAT LONELINESS



All who have lost a loved one to death experience loneliness following the loss. Though it may be a small consolation, it's worth noting that loneliness is a common human condition.

Author Tom Wolfe

noted: *The whole conviction of my life now rests upon the belief that loneliness, far from being a rare and curious phenomenon peculiar to myself and to a few solitary men, is the central and inevitable fact of human existence.*

Though lonely feelings exist and persist, there are ways to combat loneliness. Consider adapting some of these ways to relieve your bouts with loneliness.

- **Connect with others.** This can mean picking up the phone to chat, sending off daily emails to friends, writing letters, and spending time with people and organizations. Connect and remain connected.
- **Be involved.** Don't allow yourself to become a shut in or a hermit. Get out there. Take a class. Participate in a workshop. Hear a lecture. Join a civic group. The possibilities are endless and only limited by your time and creativity.
- **Have a trusted confidant.** If you don't have one, find a friend with whom you can bare your soul, someone you feel totally at ease talking about your deepest pains and greatest joys.
- **Repeat this sentence.** I am alone but I do not need to be lonely. There are many people who are not alone but are very lonely. Being alone is not the same as being lonely. Think carefully and deeply about this distinction.
- **Express gratitude.** Happiness in life is the by product of gratitude. So, if you haven't done this in some time, today count your blessings.
- **Be a good listener.** Those who listen carefully, compassionately to others never lack friends. Be there for someone else and just listen to them.
- **Help others.** One widow says: "I find it hard and awkward to socialize so I have nudged myself to become a volunteer at a hospice. I'm there twice a week. What a life changing experience this has been. I've made many new friends and gotten to know some very courageous people."
- **Read more, a lot more.** This will help you immerse yourself in a story or in learning some thing new.
- **Focus on the positive.** See your cup as half full rather than half empty. Face your future with faith not fear, with hope not dread.

BEGIN EACH DAY POSITIVELY

One effective way to get yourself off to a positive start is by beginning each day with a blessing. That advice is offered by Charlotte Davis Kasl, PhD., a psychologist. In her book, Finding Joy: 101 Ways To Free Your Spirit and Dance With Life, she writes: "A wonderful way to start the day is to bless it." Dr. Davis Kasl offers these ways to do that:

Blessings on this day, may I make it special in some way.
Blessings on my life, may I treat it with love and care.
Blessings on all people, may I see the goodness in everyone.
Blessings on nature, may I notice its beauty and wonder.
Blessings on the truth, may it be my constant companion.