

HEALING HEARTS UPDATE

To all of you who were counting on me being at Bethany on Jan. 8, 2018, I truly apologize.

I was lying in a hospital bed with a fracture in my foot, later to find out there is a badly stretched tendon a-round the heel. This week the process of repairing the foot/heel was started. A prosthetic foot will be made in Texas to replace the arthritic area. So part of me will be from Texas, who would have thought it? The estimated time- of completion is the end of July. Therefore, I hope I can be of some assistance in your grieving process by sending a note now and then.

But let's talk about the loss of your loved one. Joyce Brother's husband was dying of cancer and he eventually passed. She later wrote in her column, *u* I thought I was prepared for his loss, but I wasn't and there was not a way I could have been prepared for the loss until it happened.

In an article from Detroit Area for the Aging, sums it up very well. "The funeral is over. The loved one is gone. All the people who came to pay respects have left. Now, all that is left is you and a quiet emptiness and an extreme sense of loss. It's just you and your grief." My sister lost her husband last year and she verified that statement. You walk into your home and they are not there.

Dealing with that loss is of utmost importance and dealing with it now is wise. Putting it off has repercussions later. We live in a society that is not acquainted with the process of grieving. You may get tied up in handling financial matters, writing out Thank you cards, etc. People may not detect your pain because you hide it with a smile. When grief overcomes you allow yourself to entertain it then, not later. Someone may even come up and give you a much needed hug, goodness knows, you may need it.

Bethany has several social events that you can choose which ones to attend, so keep an eye on the bulletin every week.

Most of all, in my thoughts is to spend time with the lord, reading your Bible and praying. The lord and our Heavenly Father wants our attention and to love Him with all of our heart. He loves you that way and has promised to always be with you. Always! Ps.23 is a great reminder of that, The Lord is YOUR SHEPARD! Sincerely, Ellen Mc Gillis

Here are several resources to also find help. Hopefully younger family members may help you make use of these.

1. Madison Heights - St John Maccomb/
Oakland Hospital #248-967-7000
2. Clinton Twp.- Senior Adult Center
Griefshare- #586-226-3406
3. Shelby Twp. - Shepard's Gate
12400 23 Mile Rd. #586-731-4544
Meetings are Thursday evenings 6:30 is
Pizza, etc. 7:00 is the meetings which
includes: Grief, Divorce and an area for
Children's dealing with loss section.
I personally advocate that resource.
4. St Clair Shores - St Joan of Arc Church-
#586-777-3670
5. Southfield or Novi - Providence Park
Hospital- #586-464-4841 or #586-335-
1430
6. Compassionate Friends for parents who
have lost children of any age, online
support & for local chapters visit the
webpage at
www.compassiontefriends.org
Books and Videos: ("The Journey of
Grief") Doug Manning Videos are available
on 'You Tube,' Facebook look for "National
Grief Awareness Day". Healgrief.org
7. "The One Thing No One Says About
Grieving" By Katherine Schaffer on
ThriveGlobal.com

Help When You're Grieving

This is normal. People feel bad when they lose those they were once close to, liked or shared a life with; whether it was a husband, wife, mother, father, grandparent, cousin, child or friend. That person once had a place in your life and now they're gone. But you are left here experiencing the pain of loss. Some people may be able to take a little time and move on; others may need a months or longer to deal with their feelings before they even know what their next step will be. Whether you're able to get through your grief in the allowed 3-5 bereavement days allotted to you by work (or society) or not, you must take the time you need to grieve.

Research shows that if grief is put off instead of processed, it can become a bigger issue. At worst, it can stay with you and affect the rest of your life. Grief you have not felt, acknowledged or dealt with, multiplied with other losses or life challenges, can become "chronic," "complicated," "cumulative," "masked," "delayed" or "disenfranchised." These are all names for grief that could become an intense, chronic state of mourning. Grief not addressed can develop into depression, an inability to function, lethargy, weight loss or gain, uncontrolled anger or self-destructive behaviors. When grief becomes too much to bear, it's important to seek help.

"We live in a culture that doesn't teach us how to grieve appropriately," said Becky A. Hall, LMSW, bereavement coordinator for Ascension Healthcare. "Those who are grieving are often overlooked because their pain is usually not seen." Hall explained that when grief is not addressed it can cause complications. "Avoiding a previous loss can make a new one significantly more painful," she said. Unfinished business may surface as the new loss triggers previous losses, placing the griever at risk for complicated grief."

Such was the case for Oakland county resident Kathy when she first experienced grief at age nine. "My dad died suddenly in the middle of the night. Mom came into the bedroom shared by my older sister and I, and said-that our dad was dead," said Kathy. "The ambulance came, took him away and my mom didn't know what to do with us because she was in shock, so she sent us to school hours before the building was open."

Kathy's mom didn't get help dealing with her grief and withdrew into herself. "When you're nine, you don't know what to do. After dad died, it left a big empty space. Not only did we lose him, we lost contact with all his friends and all the things we used to do together. We would camp, fish and travel all over the place and that all ended when he passed away." it was a loss on many levels.

She continued, "I didn't have anyone to count on so I became very independent." Kathy mentioned that this was probably why she didn't want to get married. "I think if you don't deal with your grief, it just makes it that much worse later in life."

At age 34, Kathy met her future husband Dave. "He had the most wonderful smile. If I was in a bad mood, Dave would just smile at me until I couldn't take it anymore and I'd have to smile back," said Kathy. The pair married in 1994 and all was wonderful for a while.

"Shortly after our second anniversary Dave was in pain from what turned out to be acute pancreatitis," Kathy said. "We ended up in the emergency room and he almost died that Thanksgiving Day." He stopped breathing in the ICU and they resuscitated him. Complications from the surgery that followed would haunt .him for years.

Then one evening in February Dave wasn't feeling well. . Nervous about insurance coverage, they held off going to the hospital until the next morning. By the time they arrived at the emergency room, his condition had worsened. "First they were going to do a test and then they were going to intubate him. The next thing I knew, doctors were doing CPR on him for 45 minutes," Kathy said. Dave died at age 59 from a pulmonary embolism in his lung.

"It was so unexpected and sudden," said ..Kathy's "At first , it's like nothing but shock and crying, trying to get beyond the funeral arrangements. Fortunately, friends and family helped me."

People would say, "Let me know if I can help you in any way ... but sometimes you don't even know what you need." She said it was better when people stepped up to offer practical assistance. "My brother-in-law sold Dave's car, my sister-in-law took me out to lunch, and my sister initiated cleaning out a spare room that was cluttered with Dave's belongings. Things like that were so helpful to me," Kathy said.

But Kathy's previous experience with her father's death complicated her experience with Dave's passing. She recalled, "For the six months that followed the funeral, I was just numb and I went on like that until I started getting feedback from others who said, You're doing very well." Someone finally suggested i seek help from a grief counselor."

According to Hall, "Grief counseling provides a supportive atmosphere where a person can grieve in their own organic way because grief is unique to each person and a grief counselor is sensitive to those needs."

It was while attending sessions with her grief counselor that Kathy was encouraged to join a local grief support group. Hall explained what happens there. "If you are new to the group, we start with introductions where we each member briefly shares who they are and what brought them to the group. Self disclosure is done on the griever's terms. Sometimes sitting quietly and listening to others is just as helpful as telling your own story." Hall said group exercises are focused on the grievers, allowing a safe place for expression of thoughts and feelings, while respecting other people's points of view.

Kathy noted, "I liked the fact that I could talk one-on-one with the counselor to discuss things I may not want to reveal in a group setting. But I also liked being part of a grief support group because you're with a bunch of people who know exactly what you're going through and you become friends. You feel validated when you express yourself. They've all been through what you're going through so it's okay to cry and get those emotions out in this safe space. It's somehow very comforting to be in a room with people who are just as devastated as you are."

Another member of Kathy's group is George, age 84. He lost his wife, Lee, in May 2013. "I didn't have a whole lot of experience dealing with grief and death," said the Macomb County resident. "But three months after Lee died, I underwent quadruple bypass heart surgery and that took about six months of my life, so I didn't have too much time to grieve. But I knew Lee wasn't here and I missed her," he said.

After going through some bad days, George saw a notice in a hospital newsletter about a newly forming grief support group. "I decided to attend and ended up asking a lot of questions which they answered nicely. I participated for an hour and a half and I felt pretty good afterwards, so I kept going back and attended sessions every other week." In those meetings, George discovered he had a lot of anger that he was able to work through. "I've been going there for four years now and I feel a lot better. I keep going back because I still learn things. I listen to other people express what they're going through, remembering what I went through at certain times," he said. "I've also made some good friends." He credits his group's facilitators with helping him learn how to understand his grief rather than endure it.

Somebody recently asked George how he would know when he wouldn't need his grief group anymore? "When your memories are good rather than dominated by sadness, then I think you're just about there. You're not remembering the bad and sad things, and when a memory comes; it's a good memory. You feel different. You don't feel sad every time you think about that person," said George. He's learned and contributed a lot at his grief group. He noted, "it used to be where I needed to fill my days. Now I don't have enough time to do the things I want to do."

Special thanks to Elaine Rosen, LMSLIV, ACSW, a grief and loss counselor for 30 years. She and Becky A. Hall both contributed to this story.