



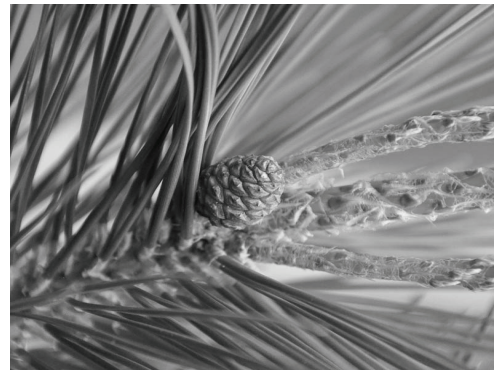
High Peaks Hospice & Palliative Care Inc.

Dignity, comfort and peace at the end of life.

Different Bonds, Different Grief

There are different kinds of losses.
This publication offers insight into:

- *When a Spouse or Life Partner dies*
- *Losing a Parent as an Adult*
- *Children Who are Grieving*
- *Loss of a Child or Grandchild*



*No matter how complicated the loss,
Healing is a choice.
Healing is your right.
Healing is your responsibility.*

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When a Spouse or Life Partner Dies

Few life events are as painful as the death of your spouse or life partner. You may feel uncertain about whether you will survive this overwhelming loss. You may even feel uncertain about whether you have the energy or desire to try to heal.

This was your companion, the person who shared your life. If you are not sure who you are and feel confused, it is because you have lost a part of yourself. Feeling disoriented is natural when you experience the death of someone you loved, lived with, and depended on.

Your grief is special because no one had the same relationship you had with your spouse or partner. As a result, you will grieve in your own special way. Do not compare your experience with others or adapt their expectations about how long your grief should last.

You and only you should decide what is done with your loved one's clothes and personal belongings. Do not force yourself to go through these things until you are ready. Take your time.

Days and events that held special meaning for you as a couple (such as birthdays, a wedding anniversary or holidays) may be more difficult to go through by yourself. Have a plan for coping with the days before, and the day of, these special events.

Reading:

How To Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies, By Therese Rando 1991

How We Grieve: Relearning The World, By Thomas Attig 1996

The Year of Magical Thinking,
By Joan Didion 2005

Losing a Parent as an Adult

Your mother or father has died. Whether you had a good, bad or indifferent relationship with the parent who died, your feelings were probably quite strong.

The parent – child bond is perhaps the most fundamental of all human ties. When your mother or father dies, the bond is torn. You may feel many strong emotions due to this loss. You may be surprised at the overwhelming depth of feelings of loss. If this was your second parent to die, you may feel especially sorrowful.

If you have brothers or sisters, the death of this parent is probably affecting each of you differently. After all, each of you had a unique relationship with the parent, so each will mourn the loss in his or her own way. The death may also stir up sibling disagreements. Recognizing that such disagreements are normal.

Finally, when there is a surviving parent, try to understand the impact of the death on him or her. The death of a spouse or partner will probably have a very different meaning for the surviving spouse or partner than it does for you, the child of the relationship.

Reading:

The Orphaned Adult: Understanding And Coping With Grief And Change After The Death Of Our Parents, By Alexander Levy 2000

When Parents Die: Learning to Live with the Loss of a Parent, By Rebecca Abrams, Dora Black 1999

Grieving Kids

Children grieve. Even before children are able to talk, they grieve when someone they love dies. And these feelings about the death become a part of their lives forever.

Some adults try to spare their children the pain and sadness of loss by not talking about the death. It is important to understand that children will grieve anyway.

Adults who talk openly about the death help children to understand that grief is normal when someone they love dies. Children need to know that it is all right to be sad and to cry and that the hurt they feel now will not last forever.

Patience is needed in responding to children's questions about grief. Responses should be in language they can understand and it is not necessary to have all the answers. Children will ask some questions about death over and over again.

Repeating questions helps them understand and adjust to their loss.

Reading: Children

When Dinosaurs Die, By Laurie & Marc Brown 1998

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Kids, By Alan Wolfelt 2001

Reading: Teens

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens, By Alan Wolfelt 2001



Loss of a Child or Grandchild

A terrible thing has happened. Your child has died. You are overwhelmed with the grief, anger, and hurt. You hurt in your heart, body, and mind. You feel as if you have died too. Even simple tasks become almost too much to do as you try to make sense of what has happened.

Having to go on without your child seems like a cruel trick. You keep asking the questions: "Why me?" "Why my child?" Consider taking a "moment-to-moment" or "one-day-at-a-time" approach that allows you to grieve at your own pace.

As parents, you have not only lost your child, you have also lost the hopes and dreams you had for your child. The two of you will grieve differently, so, it is important to respect each other's to do what right to do what feels best for him or her. Realize your own pain may be so great that you cannot help the other grieve.

The death of a child has been described as the most difficult, painful, and time-consuming loss parents can suffer because it is not how life is supposed to be. As parents, you expect your child to outlive you. You may also feel your role was to keep your child safe. You saw yourselves as givers and nurturers of life, so it is difficult to accept the fact of your child's death. Whatever the circumstances of your children's death, you will need to share your grief with others.

The grandparent-grandchild relationship is a very special one. When a grandchild dies, grandparents grieve too. You not only grieve for you grandchild, but also for the bereaved parents. In fact, the hardest part for you may be the pain you feel for the child's parents. But your own grief may also be very intense. When a child dies, both parents and grandparents lose a part of their future.

Suggested Web Sites:

Good Grief Resources: <http://www.goodgriefresources.com>

For Widows & Widowers: <http://www.widownet.org>

The Compassionate Friends, a national organization which assists families in the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child: www.compassionatefriends.org

The Dougy Center for Grieving Children and Families: www.dougy.org

Losing a Parent, a resource for those who have lost a Mom or Dad ...too soon:

www.geocities.com/hotsprings/sauna/4424/

Reading: Bereaved Parents

Beyond Tears: Living after Losing a Child by Ellen Mitchell, Carol Barkin, Audrey Cohen & Lorenza Colletti 2005

When The Bough Breaks: Forever After The Death Of A Son Or A Daughter by Judith R. Bernstein 1998

Our bereavement support group meets the 2nd Thursday of the month from 3 to 4:30 pm at the Hand House in Elizabethtown. Call Joan at 546-9850 for details.

Information for this grief publication was adapted from the following sources: "Helping Yourself Heal When Someone You Love Dies," "Helping Yourself Heal When a Parent Dies," "Helping Yourself Heal When a Spouse Dies," By Alan Wolfelt. "Understanding Grief...When a Child Dies," by Compassionate friends. "Children Mourning, Mourning Children," edited by Kenneth Doka. "The Bereaved Parents' Survival Guide," by Juliet Rothman. Adapted by Barbara Hofrichter of High Peaks Hospice & Palliative Care.

