

# Grief Notes

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## The Cliché Trap by George Mclaughlin, Bereavement Coordinator

We live in a world that is full of clichés and quaint sayings that we often feel fit the situation that we or someone else is currently dealing with. These phrases are often meant to be humorous or said in a way to emphasize a point trying to be made and roll off the tongue without much thought for their relevance to the current situation.

Cliche, also spelled cliché, is a 19th century borrowed word from the French which refers to a saying or expression that has been so overused that it has become boring and unoriginal. The French word “cliché” was first used to describe the sound of a printing plate, which prints the same thing over and over. Like the original meaning, we can easily fall into the trap of using these phrases over and over again. Doing so is “as easy as pie”. But before we “throw the baby out with the bath water,” we know that clichés are still used often in books, poetry, advertisements, television shows and movies. Even Shakespeare in his classic writings often used clichés, such as “All that glitters is not gold”, “Melted into thin air” and “Jealousy is the green-eyed monster” to mention a few. So clichés are not always seen in a bad light.

But how does this relate to those of us that are grieving the loss of a loved one? If you have not already experienced the pain from clichés on your grief journey, you probably will at some point. Well-meaning relatives, friends, and co-workers who don't know what to say to someone suffering the loss of a loved one, often say nothing at all or fall into the trap of using clichés. They fear saying the wrong thing, but when sensing the need to say something may say the first thing that comes to mind ... a cliché.

### Some of the most common clichés are:

- “I know how you feel.”
- “Time heals all wounds.”
- “It's time to put it behind you.”
- “They're in a better place.”
- “You have to keep busy.”
- “Every cloud has a silver lining.”

Amid our loss, we can feel abandoned by people because of these or similar statements. We too may have said many of the same things to our own friends or loved ones over the years. It's easy to fall into the cliché trap. In the weeks and months to come be prepared for clichés to be thrown your way. Make an effort to be gracious to those who may say the wrong thing in an attempt to be a comfort or help to you. They may “drive you crazy” but usually have “their hearts in the right place”; they just didn't choose their words well. Even poor attempts to bring comfort can be appreciated and will help you cherish those who are able to share meaningful words of love and support or who are just there to provide a listening ear. They are “worth their weight in gold”!