

Grief Notes

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Caring for Ourselves by Ron Cunningham, Bereavement Coordinator

From the time I was young, I have been told, “If it is not written down, it is not a list.” I have to admit, lists allow me to quickly finish a project because I am not running back and forth to the store buying things I forgot to buy the last time. I can focus on plowing through my project and getting it done. This is the mentality many people have: Let me get this done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Grieving is not at all like that. No matter how quickly you want to be done with grief, working hard and expecting immediate results is not how grief works. Grief often disrupts our lives. It can cause depression, including a loss of interest in things you once enjoyed. It can increase anxiety. It can lead to isolation from people and life. Depression, anxiety, and isolation can keep us from moving forward towards healing, and these are only a few of the challenges on the “grieving list.” As much as we would like to, there is no quick path through grief. What are we to do?



Experts in the field will use the term “self-care” when talking about working through the process of grief. They tell us it will be different for each person, but there are some things that can help make grief more manageable and they are on the self-care list. I often encourage people to be around other people. As a caregiver, you may have been isolated from people for years and are likely exhausted. Your entire focus has been caring for your loved one. Now that your loved one is gone, the desire or energy to be around people may simply not be there. To help with the fatigue you need sleep, and you need nourishment. You need to feed your body and also find ways to feed your soul. One way to help yourself is to get out of the house and find the healing power in being around others. Many people have found support from social clubs, church, and volunteering. Finding you have the energy to return to activities you enjoyed before is encouraging and can be a great comfort.

Getting out can be hard when grief leaves you worn out, but it helps. Exercise can also be a great benefit. Just getting up out of a chair might in itself be a struggle, but taking those first few steps can be a good start. Checking with a doctor before beginning to exercise is recommended.

There are books written on grief and a quick internet search will turn up numerous lists with suggestions to help manage grief. Your area’s Northern Light Bereavement Coordinator is only a phone call away. We welcome your call and every month you will find our contact information on the other side of this letter.