

Bereavement news for people living with grief



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henryford.com

The psychology behind inheritance conflicts

"Wills are the lit fuses for unfulfilled emotional needs and family breakdowns"

Excerpts by Ilze Neething

When parents die, children may deeply grieve over them. Each child will cope and deal with loss in his or her own unique way. Then comes the inevitable Will and Inheritance to complicate mourning and loss. Sibling rivalry often takes place over personal belongings, finances or family homes. At first sight, we always jump to the conclusion of wealth and greed. However, there is more to these conflicts than meets the eye.

Inheritance conflicts actually are underlying indications of the children's need to feel connected, and be valued by the parent. Personal items inherited, even family homes or land are not about material aspects only. It is rather what the items symbolize to the grieving children. Grandma's Riempiers bank, Mum's wedding band, Dad's old reading glasses, whatever the item, there is a story and a priceless connection to history, to where we came from, memories of childhood, and the people we loved and shared our lives with, and especially a reminder of how much our parents loved us. Often children will see their inheritance as a final grade from their parents about how they measured up to receive their parent's love whether it is a perceived or an actuated reflection of circumstance. Children may also see the inheritance as how well their parent understood their needs as a person.

In remembrance of fathers

We do not need a special day to bring you to our minds.
The days we do not think of you are very hard to find.
Each morning when we awake
we know that you are gone.
And no one knows the heartache
as we try to carry on.
Our hearts still ache with sadness
and secret tears still flow.
What it meant to lose you no one will ever know.
Our thoughts are always with you,
your place no one can fill.
In life we loved you dearly; in death we love you still.
There will always to be a heartache,
and often a silent tear.
But always a precious memory of
the days when you were here.
If tears would make a staircase,
and heartaches make a lane,
We'd walk the path to heaven and
bring you home again.
We hold you close within our hearts;
and there you will remain,
To walk with us throughout our lives
until we meet again.
Our family chain is broken now,
and nothing seems the same,
But as God calls us one by one,
the chain will link again.

Seven tips for coping with grief this summer

Exerpts from Cheri Miller, MST, hospice counselor

"If you recently lost someone you love, everything you used to enjoy about summer may be different."

Grief can be more intense in the summertime. Very often. Bereaved people, including kids, find it hard to cope with the sadness at a time when everyone else is out there having fun. "Everyone is celebrating, but I feel like a downer. Summer doesn't matter because the person I love isn't here."

Tips to help yourself as you struggle with grief:

1. Know that for most people, grief is a common reaction to loss, and it does pass with time. The second year may be easier, and usually you will enjoy again the activities that were special to you before the loss.
2. Try the things you enjoyed previously and see if they're a good fit or still too painful. You may find the activities comforting.
3. Go outside, if possible. A dose of sunshine and Vitamin D helps people cope with stress.
4. Try doing your favorite activities in a new way that honors your loved one who died. Be intentional and purposeful, i.e. if your Dad loved fishing, plan a trip in his memory.
5. Try new summer activities and create new traditions if you are ready.
6. When your child is grieving, they may feel guilty about enjoying summer break; remind them it's okay to have fun and enjoy life after a death. Stick to a routine, do things that bring happy memories to mind, such as making your loved one's favorite meal.
7. Find others who share your experience. Seek free support groups that may help.

Four major benefits of journaling

Tony Fallanzo; Journaling gives grief a voice.

1. **Journaling will keep us active, give us purpose and allow us to perform a task that is constructive.** Writing will offer "meaningful conversations" with ourselves. These conversations may help us to be more in control of our lives as we are engaged in a worthwhile activity that stimulates our minds.
2. **We can relieve stress when we write.** This is a huge advantage. Journaling will act as a vessel to release the bottled up emotions that bubble under the surface. Releasing our pain and sadness on paper may make us cry or scream. These are normal reactions and should be welcomed as they are stress reducers.
3. **Writing is cathartic.** It helps heal because it allows for honest self-expression. We can release our emotions at the moment we encounter them. Journaling is personal and will bring out issues that we may not want or be able to share with others. There is value in recording what we experience. One day we will return to our journal, read these heartfelt words of expression and truly appreciate how far we've traveled.
4. **Finally, we can learn so much about ourselves when we write.** Just the process of journaling forces our eyes, hand and mind to work in unison to deliver something "tangible". The result is visual and we can read what we are feeling as many times as we want. Each time may shed more light on our original idea. This may detail a clearer understanding of why we grieve and what's behind it.

As we look back

*As we look back over time
We find ourselves wondering ...
Did we remember to thank you enough
For all you have done for us?
For all the times you were by our sides
To help and support us,
To celebrate our successes,
To understand our problems,
And accept our defeats?
Or for teaching us by your example,
The value of hard work, good judgment,*

*Courage and integrity?
We wonder if we ever thanked you
For the sacrifices you made
To let us have the very best?
And for the simple things
Like laughter, smiles and times we shared?
If we have forgotten to show our
Gratitude enough for all the things you did,
We're thanking you now.
And we are hoping you knew all along,
How much you meant to us.*

Author unknown

When death brings out the worst

Excerpts from What'sYourGrief.com

We know that there is often a good reconciliation with family relationships at the end of life. Friends and family support one another in unimaginably self-less ways, and share memories at the darkest hours. However, today we will reflect on what brings out the worst in family and how to cope with it. Grief alone breeds a loss of control, but additionally when conflict arises this leads to additional stress for family members and a loss of support that they need and anticipate. Typically, the following common material conflicts arise: when to sort through belongings, who gets what, what to keep and give away, whether to keep or sell a house, and money. One emotional conflict is grieving differently in prescription and time-frame. So why do these conflicts arise:

The brain:

When we are under stress and in crisis due to death, our brains work differently. There are parts of our brain that think rationally and parts of our brain that work more on impulse and emotion. When we are experiencing death of a loved one, it is harder to think with the rational part of our brain. We default to using the emotional part of our brain the parts of our brain that struggle with reasoning, memory and long-term thinking.

Communication:

Communication (or lack thereof) can be a key issue that leads to conflict. If there has not been a plan for who, when, and how certain things were to be handled, it isn't uncommon for unresolved conflict to linger and high emotions to be apparent. Try to avoid accusatory statements. Focus on expressing your own experience since the death of your loved one. Use "I" statements and not "You" statements. Example, instead of saying "I can't believe you threw away mom's clothes without talking to me first. You are so self-centered and thoughtless." Instead you could say, "I was really hurt when you threw away mom's clothes without talking to me first". It made me feel like you didn't care about my grief or attachment to those things, and now I am unable to recover them."

Identify the behavior, how it made you feel and open a dialogue without making the other person defensive. Be open to their feedback. You probably haven't been perfect either. Openly, listen to what they need from you.

Control:

Death and grief equals total loss of control. We want to be able to control and change what has happened. CS Lewis said, "No one ever told me grief felt so much like fear." This change, loss of control, and loss of stability can be terrifying. This behavior may be demonstrated when one family member tries to regain a sense of control by planning funeral without the input of other family members or gets rid of and sorts belongings immediately following death of loved one without consulting other family members. Helping another family member to have a sense of control, while communicating how their actions are making others feel, can be helpful. If that member continues to be driven by a need for control, family may redirect this person's energy into things that are useful and that may cause less family strife.

Generalizing the negative:

Timeout! Grief makes us all do crazy, sometimes manipulative things that we often regret. It is important to cut people (and ourselves) some slack. People do all sorts of awful things when they are grieving, so view things as poor choices due to an emotionally and physically taxing time in their life. If a person has been in good standing with you most of their life, try to remember that this grieving time may be the exception in their behavior, not a rule of forward character development. Just like you need to be forgiving and gentle with yourself, do on to others the same.

Mediation:

Use professional mediators when conflict cannot be resolved. These mediators often can help family members gain the perspective of the other.

"At all the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of Summer, we remember them."

[Sylvan Kamens & Rabbi Jack Reimer](#)



2026 Bereavement support groups

January-June

2nd Wednesday of the month

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Location:

Henry Ford Macomb Hospital
Medical Pavilion – 4th Floor Meeting Room #6
16151 19 Mile Road
Clinton Township, MI 48038

Monthly: 1/14, 2/11, 3/11, 4/8, 5/13, 6/10

3rd Tuesday of the month

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Location:

Virtual via Teams

Monthly: 1/20, 2/17, 3/17, 4/21, 5/19, 6/16

4th Tuesday of the month

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Location:

Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital
Conference Room (LDRP2)
6777 West Maple Road
West Bloomfield, MI 48322

Monthly: 1/27, 2/24, 3/24, 4/28, 5/26, 6/23

SandCastles children's grief support program

SandCastles offers services in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties, as well as virtually. Call **313-771-7005** or email sandcastles@hfhs.org for more information.



Henry Ford Hospice bereavement services

Offers bereavement support to hospice family members, caregivers and anyone in the community 18 years or older who has experienced the loss of a loved one.

Program offerings include:

- Periodic phone calls
- Monthly newsletters
- Support groups
- Grief education
- One/one support is determined on an individual basis.
- Memorial services
- Community resources/referrals

In general, services last for 13 months, but support can be extended or discontinued. These services are free, with no cost to you.

To learn more about these services please call **586.276.9570** or go to henryford.com/services/at-home/hospice/support.

Henry Ford provides qualified interpreters and other aids and services for the deaf and hard of hearing at no cost.

To request assistance, call Henry Ford bereavement services at 586.276.9570.

A three-day notice is required when requesting an interpreter.