

# Bereavement news for people living with grief



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Editor:  
Erica Gilbert, MSW

[henryford.com](http://henryford.com)

## We Are Here

by Kathleen Barletta, LMSW, ACSW

As human beings, I believe we all just really want to be listened to and cared about. Working in the field of bereavement can be challenging. I cannot take your pain away; or fix it and make it better. What I offer as a bereavement professional is: I can listen without judgment, with a true understanding of your deep loss. I can let you to tell your story over and over again. I care about you and your grief journey.

No one grieves the same. We all have individual and personal needs. The grieving process is difficult, at times it is exhausting. There may be moments one may feel they don't even know which way is up or down. This is okay, you are doing nothing wrong. This is the nature of grief.

Grief is something everyone will experience. There is no getting around it, grief hurts. Grief is the price we pay for love. I understand that when someone is grieving, they may feel very isolated and alone; and no one could possibly understand their situation. Yes, you are correct there is no 100 % way I could possibly understand all the raw emotions you are experiencing. But what I can say is, you are not alone. We (The Bereavement Team) are here to support you and guide you in your grief journey. In general, the more significant the loss, the longer it takes to adjust.

Please be kind to yourself. Grief is something one should not rush through. When the process is rushed, it just makes things more difficult. Let the tears flow; be angry if you need to; let it out. I promise you will be better off in the long run. You will be a healthier, happier, whole person. I understand that if you have never experienced a loss, it can be very scary and overwhelming.

Grief is scary. It turns the world in which we know it upside down. Grief causes fear and anxiety. Grief takes us out of our "comfort zone". The healing process is about finding your new "comfort zone", and your new sense of self. Let me be clear, this does not happen overnight. It is a process. For some it may take weeks or months, for others it may take years depending on the loss. Grief is not something you "get over." It is something you walk through. The grief will always be with you. But grief does not define you. You have the choice to embrace your grief or not. To find your new "comfort zone" and sense of self. It's okay to be happy again.

Moving forward with your life does not mean you are forgetting your loved one. Instead, you are honoring them. There will always be a special place in your heart and mind for them; a special memory to share with others. Love never dies. Be kind to yourself. One step, one moment at a time. We are here to listen.

## Why?

Author unknown

Why?

That's what we ask.

The truth is, we may never be able to know for sure WHY. But we do know that there is no single "should have done" or "could have done" or "did" or "didn't do" that would have changed that WHY.

All that LOVE could do was done.



## Prevent The Negative Health Impacts of Grief

by Laura Slap-Shelton, Psy.D.

Studies have shown that the bereaved, particularly in the early stages of grieving, are at risk for a greater number of health problems. As hard as it is to think about yourself at the time of a significant loss, it is important to take care of yourself in order to handle the difficult emotions and adjustments you will be making. For many of us there are others who care about and depend on us.

### Here are some ideas which may be helpful.

- Try to get enough sleep.
- Attend an exercise class on a bi-weekly basis.
- Drink alcohol only in company and in moderation if at all.
- Do not start new bad habits such as smoking.
- Wear your seat belt when driving. Drive carefully. Pull off the road if suddenly overwhelmed by grief and always drive with a box of tissues.
- Do not over schedule your time.
- Find a bereavement support group and attend regularly.
- Create down time for yourself in which you will not be disturbed.
- Keep a journal of your feelings, experiences, dreams and goals.
- Try to go out with a friend at least once a week. Start small with a lunch or breakfast. When you are ready try a movie or dinner.
- Get out in nature.
- Create a memorial for your loved one.
- When you're ready, dare to laugh. Find a funny book, movie or comedy album. Don't feel guilty.
- Breathe Breathe Breathe. Do deep breathing exercises on a daily basis.
- If you are suddenly a single parent, find ways to have time to yourself. Find a babysitter or ask a friend to take your children for a few hours during the week.
- Find a support group for families which can help you as you help your children through the grief process.
- Check the symptoms of depression. If you have several of them consider seeing a counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist who is able to help you with your depression.

Whatever you do, remember to be kind to yourself. Reduce your stress, and give yourself the time you need to heal.

# When Should I Seek Professional Help If I Am Grieving?

From the guidance of Dr. Michael E. Hirsch, MD, an individual should seek the counsel of a professional when serious and/or long-lasting symptoms interfere with daily life. He emphasizes the importance of talking with your doctor or mental health professional if you are experiencing suicidal thoughts or other intensified symptoms of bereavement-related depression.

## He noted the following as symptoms of concern:

- Persistent feeling of worthlessness, which is generally felt with depression, but not with healthy grief.
- Ongoing guilt.
- Marked mental and physical sluggishness.
- Persistent trouble functioning.
- Hallucinations, other than occasionally thinking you see or hear the deceased.

Dr. Hirsch mentions that the combination of psychotherapy and antidepressant medication can prove beneficial in alleviating symptoms of depression associated with grief. Grief can be consuming to some individuals. There are times when individuals find that their circumstance doesn't improve at all over the course of months or years. This may be a sign that he or she is suffering from Complicated Grief. There may be layers of grief due to ongoing losses, or inadequate time to grieve the loss of loved one because one moves from one season of caregiving into the next, i.e., in the case where one parent passes away and the other parent requires ongoing caregiving in the absence of spouse or financial turmoil, this is also called Protracted or Chronic Grief. Grief coupled with a traumatic experience or unbearable separation from a loved one is diagnosed as Traumatic Grief.

Complicated Grief is said to occur when the perception of death appears traumatic, sudden, violent or unexpected. Often times there are underlying conflicts within relationships, workplace, or decline in bereaved health that challenge bereaved's ability to cope with loss. A sense of abandonment, angry relationships without a "final" conversation or goodbye, and indifference to attachment with loved one can facilitate this type of grief. At present statistics show that among adults who suffer a significant loss, approximately 1 in 11 will experience complicated grief.

## Prevalent symptoms are as follows:

- Intrusive, upsetting memories, thoughts, and images of the deceased.
- Constant, painful yearning for the deceased.
- Inability to accept reality of death.
- Frequent nightmares.
- Detachment from others.
- Desperate loneliness and helplessness, anger, and bitterness.
- Thoughts of suicide and wanting to die.

Many individuals will walk through their grief without needing professional help, however, it is important to evaluate what aspect of grief you are not able to overcome. An individual should feel somewhat better after a year. When your grief begins to take a toll on your daily functioning it is important to acknowledge that professional help is needed.





# 2024 Bereavement Support Groups

## January - June In Person Support Groups

### 2nd Wednesday of the month

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

**Location:**

Henry Ford Macomb Hospital  
Medical Pavilion – 4th Floor Meeting Room #5  
16151 19 Mile Road  
Clinton Township, MI 48038

Monthly: 1/10, 2/14, 3/13, 6/12

Spring Six Week Series: 4/10, 4/17, 4/24, 5/1, 5/8, 5/15

### 3rd Tuesday of the month

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

**Location:**

24445 Northwestern Highway, Suite 107  
Southfield, MI 48075  
*The group is held in the basement.*

Monthly: 1/16, 2/20, 3/19, 6/18

Spring Six Week Series: 4/16, 4/23, 4/30, 5/7, 5/14, 5/21

### 4th Friday of the month

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

**Location:**

17333 Federal Drive, Suite 260  
Allen Park, MI 48101

Monthly: 1/26, 2/23, 3/22, 6/28

Spring Six Week Series: 4/26, 5/3, 5/10, 5/17, 5/24, 5/31

### SandCastles Children's Grief Support Program

Preregistration is required. To register call : 313.771.7005

Locations: St. Clair Shores, Livonia, Clinton Twp., Rochester, Detroit, Southfield & West Bloomfield

**Pre-registration is required for all groups; you must RSVP.**

*Note: Six week series are a day and time commitment of six consecutive weeks.*

For information regarding any of the listed support groups or bereavement services offered by Henry Ford Hospice, please call the Henry Ford Hospice bereavement team at 586.276.9570.

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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.