

PARENTS CORNER

Building Your Child's Self-Esteem

As a parent, one of your prime responsibilities to your children is to foster their development of a positive self-image. The grief you're feeling can threaten your self-esteem and, as a result, affect your children's self-esteem. Your path through grief becomes both a challenge and an opportunity for growth and mastery. Facing this challenge allows you to give yourself and your children permission to grieve. It means experiencing and expressing all your feelings and giving your children permission to do the same. Dealing with death constructively, picking up the pieces of your life as a family and moving on courageously, is a major triumph.

The following is a list of general guidelines to build your children's self-esteem:

- Acknowledge your children's good behavior. Remind them regularly how terrific they are.
- Provide opportunities for your children to be responsible and to learn how to make decisions as early as possible. Children learn confidence through actions.
- Be sure your children feel valued by setting aside a part of each day to give them quality time and 100 percent of your attention.
- Make a clear distinction between your children and their behavior. Rather than saying, "You're a bad boy," say, "I don't like the way you're behaving right now."

Provide opportunities for your children to be responsible and learn how to make decisions as early as possible. Children learn confidence through actions.

- Foster independence by encouraging your children to try things on their own and respecting their opinions.
- When your children make mistakes, encourage them to see the learning and growth involved.
- Always praise your children's attempts, whether they are successful or not.

- Treat each child as a unique individual, acknowledging his or her special identity. Avoid comparisons to siblings or to other children.
- Treat your children with respect, honesty and trust.
- Reinforce inner, rather than outer, measures of success. For example, instead of asking, "Did you get an A?" ask, "Do you feel that you did your best?"
- Teach your children enjoyment and gratitude for each day through your own example of finding the positive in every situation.



- Encourage your children to take responsibility for what they do or don't do, rather than placing blame elsewhere.
- Be aware of abilities and issues at each stage of your children's development so that your expectations and reactions will be appropriate.
- Tell your children every day that you love them and show it with appropriate physical contact.
- Let your children know that you believe in them.
- Have fun with your children. Laughing and playing together lets your children know that you enjoy their company.

SHARP Hospice Care

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ISSUE 10

"There is a light in this world, a healing spirit more powerful than any darkness we may encounter. We sometimes lose sight of this force when there is suffering, too much pain. Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who hear a call and answer in extraordinary ways."

— Mother Teresa

bringing comfort to each day

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SHARP Hospice Care

ISSUE 10

Healing Through Grief

Dear Friend,

Wellness is the state in which your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions are in balance and your body is able to effectively use energy. The grief you experience during the bereavement process may upset this balance, resulting in a reduction of your body's energy.

This issue of *Healing Through Grief* will provide you with ways to balance your spiritual life, regardless of your religious or spiritual beliefs. You will also receive tips to help you overcome the challenge of growing and finding meaning from your experiences during your grieving process.

We're here to help. If you would like to talk about your loss, reactions or concerns, or if you have any questions about our services, please call **1-800-681-9188** to speak to a bereavement counselor.

Sincerely yours,
The Bereavement Department of
Sharp HospiceCare

Hope Is an Open Door

When you feel hopeful, you may have feelings of anticipation. You may think about hope as thoughts that focus on what you want to happen, rather than on what you fear could happen.

While it is easy to hope for things that are likely to happen, it is harder to hope for things that are less likely to happen. Hoping for the unimaginable is most difficult, but it may help keep your mind open to all possibilities — a healthy attitude to have in times of grief.

Your Spirituality Can Be a Great Help



Your religion or spirituality can be a great support and a powerful resource in your time of grief. You may find renewed energy by drawing comfort in the beliefs you have maintained for so long.

Through an affiliation with a church, temple or synagogue, you can find support among those who share your common religious beliefs. Faith-based communities can help remind you of God's compassion and presence, prevent unhealthy despair and foster hope.

Loss may challenge you to access your deepest resources and awake a faith you did not know you had. You cannot avoid the grieving process, nor can you expect to get through it in a short time span. Having faith can help you acknowledge the reality of your loss, reconstruct your life and find new meaning and value in the future.

Sharp HospiceCare strives to bring comfort to those working through the grieving process. Bereavement counselors provide a supportive, confidential environment for families and friends dealing with the loss of a loved one. To learn more about Sharp HospiceCare, including support groups, call 1-800-681-9188.



Is It Wrong to Feel Anger Toward God?



Some people find great comfort in their faith after the death of a loved one. Others may be tempted to turn away from God, or conclude that God does not exist. "Where is God?" they may ask, or, "Is there a God?" Another question may be, "How could God allow such a cruel thing?"

If you have anger toward God, you may feel shameful and guilty. This may be a result of the religious and secular taboos that exist around the expression of these emotions.

It is natural and OK to feel angry when you have been hurt. Suppressing any of your feelings only complicates grief, while expressing your feelings — including anger or guilt — frees you so that you are open to address your grief.

In his book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, Rabbi Harold Kushner points out that God is a God of compassion, not of power. In his view, God does not cause misfortunes; God walks with you in times of trials. Kushner affirms that it is right to turn to God to ask for help; it is good to present your troubles to God and say, "See what is happening. Help me." You can maintain your self-respect and sense of goodness as you express your feelings, trusting that God will not judge nor condemn you.

Setting Healthy Expectations

When you let go of unrealistic expectations about your life, you create space for realistic self-renewal.

Setting expectations can be a wonderful sign of healing, symbolizing your hope for a future filled with dreams. Your readiness to dream again is a sign that healing is progressing. However, it's important to examine your expectations by asking yourself, "Are my expectations realistic or are they based on how I feel life should be?"

The following thoughts often lead to **unrealistic expectations**:

- Suffering should be distributed more fairly
- Life should provide more opportunities to grow through joyous times than through suffering

- People who lead a good and decent life should not suffer any momentous losses, and should be spared any major pain

When you let go of unrealistic expectations about your life, you create space for realistic self-renewal. You can begin to re-establish goals, relationships with others and your approach to life. When you are realistic, you will find that you are not as easily disillusioned and that you feel satisfied more often.



Your Previous Experiences With Loss May Impact Your Recovery

Every loss you've experienced in the past (not limited to death), and your perception of each loss may influence your grieving process. The number, timing and nature of your losses will affect your ability to heal from your recent loss of your loved one. Some examples include:

- The loss of a key figure in your childhood can make it more difficult to cope with your present grief, and may result in unresolved issues. It is important for you to recognize that past loss may influence your ability to progress through your current grief. We encourage you to seek counseling if you find you are having difficulty progressing through grief.
- A past loss occurring in your adulthood may prepare you to better deal with your recent loss. You learn that you were able to endure the pain before and will be able to do so again.
- If you suffered multiple losses, possibly in rapid succession, you could be at higher risk for developing complications during your grieving process. It is important that you consider each past loss individually and the specific type and timing of each experience.

As part of your grieving process, it can be very helpful to talk about your feelings, fears and concerns with someone your trust. Consider turning to a counselor, family member or good friend, or attend a bereavement support group.

Sharp HospiceCare offers free support groups for people who have lost a loved one. For more information or to register, please call us at 1-800-681-9188 or visit sharp.com (search for "bereavement support groups").

