

PARENTS CORNER

Reading Recommendations for Children

Sharp HospiceCare has compiled the following list of books to help children cope with their loss. Check your local library, bookstore or online booksellers for availability of these titles. We recommend that parents read the book to or with their children, and talk about it to process questions, concerns and feelings.

UNDER AGE 7

A Funeral for Whiskers

by Dr. Lawrence Balter

Sandy is sad and confused after her cat, Whiskers, dies. Through support from her parents and a funeral for Whiskers, she is able to find comfort. A helpful essay for parents on children's grief is at the end of the book.

Double Dip Feelings

by Barbara S. Cain

Discusses and provides examples on how we sometimes feel opposite feelings at the same time. The book is not directly related to loss, but useful in helping children understand their feelings.

Lifetimes: A Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children

by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

This book includes beautiful illustrations of nature with simple writings about beginnings and endings of plants, animals and people.

Everett Anderson's Goodbye

by Lucille Clifton

Written in rhyme, this book describes the five stages of grief a young African-American boy experiences after his father dies.

Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs

by Tomie de Paola

A touching story about the love a boy has for his grandmother and great-grandmother, and how he copes with their deaths. This book is designed to be read to young school-age children.

The Dead Bird

by Margaret Wise Brown

After young children discover a bird that has just died, they bury it with care and have a funeral. Every day, the children come again to the woods to sing to the dead bird and place fresh flowers on its grave.

The Two of Them

by Aili

A simply written and colorfully illustrated story of the tender relationship between a grandfather and his granddaughter. The little girl is left with many good memories after her grandfather dies.

AGE 7 AND UP

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

by Judith Viorst

A classic story — a comfort to anyone who has ever had a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. Many find comfort in knowing others have bad days, too.

Annie and the Old One

by Miska Miles

This is a beautifully written Newberry Honor book about a young Navajo girl dealing with the approach of her grandmother's death.

Badger's Parting Gifts

by Susan Varley

Old Badger was a good friend and teacher to the woodland creatures. Following his death, the woodland creatures become saddened, but find comfort when they realize that Badger lives on through his gifts of kindness and the memories that remain.

Gran Gran's Best Trick

by L. Dwight Holden, MD

A young girl tells about her special relationship with her grandfather and her difficulty dealing with his death from cancer.

Geranium Morning

by E. Sandy Powell

Two friends whose parents die, one suddenly in an accident and one from illness, learn to deal with their grief. The book includes feeling different and having problems at school, as well as changes in the family after a death, and dealing with guilt.

SHARP Hospice
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ISSUE 09

"I know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even to death. They continue to participate in every act, thought and decision we make. Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories. We find comfort in knowing that our lives have been enriched by having shared their love."
— Leo Buscaglia

bringing comfort to each day

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ISSUE **09**

Healing Through Grief

Dear Friend,

As the months pass, we hope you are discovering changes in yourself and how you experience and adjust to your loss. Grief brings you to a place where you are confronted with a truth beyond words — a place where you can meet your true self face-to-face and experience an enormous potential for growth.

In this issue, you'll learn how to measure the progress you've made during your journey through the grieving process, including common milestones that may help you recognize that you are healing.

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

How Have You Grown?

As you continue through the grieving process, you may feel a new sense of who you are and develop new skills for managing the practical realities of your life. Your experience may have allowed you to open your heart, giving you a greater sense of patience, compassion and gratitude. You may make new friends or become involved in new activities. And the return of your sense of humor and your ability to relax and have fun could even seem surprising.

Perhaps you have learned to enjoy living without feeling disloyal to your deceased loved one, and have begun to imagine a new life for yourself. You may find that your mind is not always wandering to thoughts of your loved one. When you run across a favorite picture, hear an old tune or smell a familiar fragrance, you may be able to remember the person with joy.

You probably have grown in many ways, and still there may be days when it seems as though the death were yesterday. On certain days and in certain places, you will continue to keenly miss having your loved one beside you.

Though you may have accepted the loss and begun to release feelings of grief, the memories will always be with you. Your journey through grief is about finding ways of integrating the importance of your loved one into your life — an honor to both you and your deceased loved one. The sorrows and joys of the past become part of you, shaping who you are today and who you will be 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.



How Do You Know When You Are Getting Better?



Even though individuals coping with the loss of a loved one will experience their own unique paths through the grieving process, there are certain milestones along the way that may help you recognize that you are healing.

You will know you are healing as you:

- Find courage to face the reality of your loss and feelings
- Allow yourself to feel your emotions and not suppress them
- Confront areas, issues or relationships that are “incomplete”
- Reflect on your grief and how it has allowed you to grow
- Become more patient and allow yourself time to accept the shock of your loss
- Begin to sense freedom — not from sorrow, but from suppressed emotions
- Become more able to think about something other than your grief for any amount of time, whether minutes, hours or days
- Regain your focus and concentration

- Recognize your ability to make decisions based on your own needs
- Discover that you can change what needs to be changed
- Reconnect with others with dignity and a sense of your own worth
- Enjoy things of beauty
- Regain your sense of humor and begin to laugh
- Return to old friends and activities
- Notice that your mood swings are not quite so high and so low, and that good times last longer and the bad times are shorter
- Reflect on the past with pleasure and remember your loved one as human, with both strengths and weaknesses
- Recognize that each day can lead you closer to your goals
- Feel more at peace
- Rediscover your ability to plan each day
- Find the fortitude to reach beyond your familiar world for new friends and still remain connected to old friends
- Feel ready to take one step at a time toward your future, even though it is unknown

Each of these signs can symbolize healing and an increasing attachment to life and a future.

Exercise: Ideas for Measuring Progress

To help you recognize your feelings and behaviors that show how far you’ve come in your journey, take a few moments, either in writing or in your mind, to consider these statements.

- It took courage for me to ...
- I had the patience to ...
- I made my own decisions about ...
- I’ve discovered capabilities that I never knew I had, including ...
- Since losing my loved one, I have become ...
- I have regained control of my life in these areas ...
- I feel hopeful about ...
- I am making future plans to ...
- I was able to laugh when ...
- A memory of my loved one that gives me pleasure is ...
- I will always love him/her, but I can release and say goodbye to my loved one through these ways ...
- I have made progress in these areas of my life ...

If you have been maintaining a journal as a way of expressing your grief, consider reviewing your entries as another way to measure your progress.



The Lighter Side of Bereavement

Humor and laughter do not force you to avoid your feelings. They simply give you an opportunity to focus on another part of the picture for a while.

While you grieve, it is very important that you give yourself time and space to express your grief as well as opportunities for respite from the intensity of your feelings. Striking a balance is not easy; it often involves a trial and error process to find activities you enjoy.

Research shows that laughter is good medicine to help find respite from grief without avoiding or discounting pain. You may be startled by the suggestion that humor and grief can coexist. Consider what George Bernard Shaw said: “Life does not cease to be funny when people die, any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh.”

Humor and laughter do not force you to avoid your feelings. They simply give you an opportunity to focus on another part of the picture for a while. Instilling fun, laughter and lightness into your daily routine lends perspective and can give you some much-needed relief at this time.

Laughter and tears have more in common than you may think. Both crying and laughing release tension stored in the body. When you cry, you release toxins from your body. When you laugh, endorphins — the body’s natural painkillers — are released, fostering euphoric feelings and a sense of well-being. One of the wisest pieces of advice regarding coping with grief came from a bereaved mother: “Cry when you have to, laugh when you can.” To heal completely, it is essential to give yourself permission to both laugh and cry.

Prescription for grief: one good belly laugh per day. Repeat as needed for relief of pain. If you are like many grieving people and feel like a “pain magnet,” you may need to be deliberate in your attempts to integrate humor into your daily routines. It helps to balance your most difficult times with opportunities to tickle your funny bone. Consider integrating one or more of the following suggestions into your daily routine:

1. Watch amusing movies or TV shows.
2. Read something funny, especially before bed. Try something by Robert Fulghum, or children’s books



such as Dr. Seuss’ *Oh the Places You’ll Go!* and Judith Viorst’s *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*.

3. Get out of the house and have some fun.
4. Allow yourself to see the humorous side of life all around you — in your children, grandchildren, pets and neighborhoods.
5. Spend time with funny people. Laughing is contagious.

Remember, don’t be afraid to laugh or experience feelings of happiness. Positive feelings and actions can be a way of honoring your loved one and keeping his or her memory alive.