

In This Issue

- They Mean Well
- Protecting Identify Theft
- Friendship Inspiration (quotes)
- Where Did My Friends Go
- Dates of Continuous Care Support Group Meetings



JOIN US every Thursday! 2023 Continuous Care Support Groups



Grief Support Daytime Meetings

TIME: 1:00–2:30p.m.

LOCATION:

Cabin Coffee, 2040 Kimball Ave., Waterloo

Grief Support Evening Meetings

TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.

LOCATION:

Locke Tower Park, 4140 Kimball Ave, Waterloo

DATES:

January 5, 12, 19, 26

February 2, 9, 16, 23

March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Please feel free to bring a friend

All groups are **free** and open to the public! Call with questions at 319-233-6138.

WEATHER ALERT: If schools are closed due to weather, the meeting is canceled.

Want to be on our mailing list? Give us a call, and we can add you to our quarterly newsletter list.

Continuous Care
1519 West Fourth Street
Waterloo, IA 50702



THE CARE COURIER



January– March 2023, Vol 9 Issue 1

THEY MEAN WELL

Good people sometimes say things that can hurt or upset us. They mean well. Or they are impatient, wanting us to “get better” so that they don’t feel uncomfortable. We are a grief avoidant society. In this issue we explore words that hurt, words that heal, and the dynamics of friendships to help us understand those we care about and ourselves.

WORDS THAT HURT

“Since I lost my baby people say things that pierce my heart. I know they mean well. But if one more person tells me ‘You’re young. There’s plenty of time to have other children,’ I will scream!” Jessica looked around the group, tears streaming down her face.

Margaret, the group leader, put up her hand, silencing the too quick comfort the group wished to offer. “Tell us more honey,” she whispered. For too long Jessica had kept her grief buried.

Jessica gulped, “My husband is my best friend, and even he won’t talk about it. He says talking will only make it worse.” She reached for a tissue offered by Sheila, who patted her hand. “He tells me to get a hold of myself or that I need to stay strong for the rest of the family. He says if I just get busy then it will get better. Well, it doesn’t!”

Donna, who for weeks sat in silence, spoke. “Losing a child is the worst. I wanted to die myself! I’m with you honey. Friends and family think they are comforting me saying ‘There’s another angel in heaven,’ and I just want them to stop. God doesn’t need more angels. I need my Robby!”

The sobs came, Jessica came around the table and the two mothers held each other while the group tearfully watched, knowing that voicing ragged grief was the first step in healing mourning. Margaret rose. “We are with you. I’m so glad you finally told us your true feelings.” The women nodded.

“Can we take a little break?” Jessica asked. Everyone tearfully agreed, some offering hugs to the women on their way for refreshments. Margaret spent some time talking with Donna and Jessica.

When the group reconvened, Jessica said, “I know Donna and I need to talk about losing our children, but we’re not ready to do that right now. It’s too much. We asked Margaret if we can talk about how to deal with friends and family. I have friends who say nothing!”

Margaret turned to the group, “Have others here

experienced friends who never talk about your loss, your loved one, or have even avoided you?”

All hands went up. “Have people said things to you they think are comforting, but their comments feel like pressure to hurry up your mourning, or even sugar-coat it?”

Again, all hands went up. Like the rush of a flowing stream their responses poured out:

- “It’s a blessing in disguise.”
- “You’re young, you can find someone else.”
- “You should sell your house right away.”
- “At least you have other children.”
- “Was it suicide? How did he do it?”
- “Couldn’t you or the doctors have done more?”
- “Why didn’t you call the ambulance sooner?”
- “People won’t want to be with you if you keep talking about him/her.”
- “You are so strong. You look so wonderful!”
- “Aren’t you over it by now? It’s time to move on.”
- “At least you had him for a short time. Be glad for that.”
- “I bet you’re relieved, I mean it must have been exhausting taking care of her.”
- “Have you cleaned out his stuff? I’d really like the...”
- “It was God’s will.”
- “Don’t cry.”
- “I know how you feel.”
- “It’s probably for the best.”

WORDS THAT HEAL

Death makes many people uncomfortable, so they shy away. Avoiding the bereaved or not talking about the one who passed, expresses that you don’t care. Showing someone’s loss under the rug does not help them grieve, nor does talking open their wounds. Take time to be sincere and thoughtful, whether in person or with a note.

“What do you truly need from friends and family? Have people said or done things that helped you?” Margaret asked.

“Sometimes it’s not what they say, it’s what they don’t say,” added Ted. “I need to talk about Tina. I want to share stories about her. I don’t want her to be forgotten. I need someone to ask me what she was like.”

“A friend took me to lunch, and she asked me how I met George.” Vivian’s eyes glistened, “I told her how I wrote to him during the war. I was only 15. He was my classmate’s older brother. For two years, we corresponded every week. We fell in love through letters. When I finally met George, I already knew him!”

“Then my friend asked me to talk about our life on the farm, what I loved about George, trips we took. You know? I left our lunch higher than a kite. She took time to listen to our love story. Our sixty-eight-year love story.”

“Anything that keeps my son’s memory alive. That’s what I want,” added Donna. “Robby’s teacher let all the children draw a picture of things they remembered him doing like playing ball, eating hotdogs, riding his bike. But what meant the most to me was a small boy who came over and told me he’d been bullied. ‘Robby protected me.’ he commented. ‘He was a good boy. You raised him right.’ I look at those pictures every night.”

“Tina was a nurse,” said Ted. “People shared how she touched their lives. It made me realize she lived a good meaningful life, even if Co-Vid cut it too short.”

“‘Healing takes time, don’t try to rush it.’ Every widow and widower has told me that, said Sheila. “‘And forgive people’s cliches. They don’t know any better.’”

“My friends say: ‘You will always miss him, but it does get better if you let the grief out,’” said Vivian. She winked adding, “Then they show up with pie, and I make coffee!”

“My best friend told me, ‘I don’t know what to say except I love you. I care about you. And I’m here for you.’” Jessica smiled. “She shows up and we go for a walk. We talk about the flowers, the trees, and how life is always creating, and sometimes I talk about Martin, my baby I never got to hold. She’s just there.”

Sometimes actions speak louder than words, like mowing the yard, donating toward bills, helping the bereaved learn the skills the husband/wife did, shoveling a walk, dropping by when your friend feels forgotten. Grief lasts longer than sympathy. Show kindness in the months ahead. Good food speaks to everyone!

-VickiJolene Lindley Reece©, Continuous Care Coordinator



Friendship Inspiration

- “They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” —Carl W. Buechner
- “To the world you may be just one person, but to one person you may be the world.” —Dr. Seuss
- “A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.” —Walter Winchell
- “Never let your best friends get lonely...keep disturbing them.” —Candlelight Publications
- “A friend who understands your tears is much more valuable than a lot of friends who only know your smile.” —Unknown
- “I would rather walk with a friend in the dark, than alone in the light.” —Helen Keller
- “Everyone hears what you say. Friends listen to what you say. Best friends listen to what you don’t say.” —Unknown

PROTECTING IDENTITY THEFT: FREEZE CREDIT CARDS

“One of the things we do at Locke is to help people notify the three credit reporting agencies of the death which is strong protection against identity theft.” —Eric Locke, Funeral Director, Locke Funeral Services

Credit cards and financial accounts are not automatically cancelled when a cardholder dies. To prevent future problems, it is important to notify the three credit bureaus and freeze the accounts.

In the midst of notifying family, making funeral arrangements, and grieving, it is easy to miss notifying financial institutions and closing accounts. Make sure you talk to the funeral director to have enough copies of death certificates. Take one to your bank representative who will help you close accounts or transfer them to the death beneficiary.

Go through your loved one’s desk, wallet, lockbox to gather as much information as you can on accounts.

Inventorying your credit cards, bank accounts, various online access and passwords now is also something that you can do to help your loved ones at the time of your death.

It is very important to freeze credit card accounts quickly! Why? The freeze prevents identity theft now and in all the years to come. Thieves watch for deaths, then use your loved one’s name and social security number to open new accounts.

Frank Abagnale gives detailed steps on identity theft protection, scams, robocalls, and cyber-protection in his book [Scam Me If You Can](#) published by AARP:

“A credit freeze (or security freeze) prevents a would-be identity thief from opening new credit cards in your name. It works by denying access to your credit reports, so that when the bank or credit card company where the thief is attempting to open an account in your name goes to check your credit, the request will be denied, and so, in turn, will the thief’s application for credit in your name.” (Page 68)

Equifax: 800-685-1111 www.equifax.com
Experian: 888-397-3742 www.experian.com
TransUnion: 800-888-4213 www.transunion.com

WHERE DID MY FRIENDS GO?

The journey of grief can feel very lonely. Some friends drop away, and we feel that secondary loss too. Yet some relationships will grow deeper. We need to strengthen the bonds with those that feel comfortable with grief and give support. We also may need to identify if we have unintentionally pushed others away and reach out to them.

WHY DID THEY FADE AWAY?

“Until Tina died, I really didn’t understand what others went through,” admitted Ted. “For everyone else, life goes on, they have no idea that I need them. But I was like that. Now I’m more intentional to reach out. Even if they are ignorant, it bugs me that some of the guys have just dropped away. Why is that?” he said, turning to Margaret their Grief Group facilitator.

“Ted I truly believe that most people are doing the best that they can,” answered Margaret. “Many are unfamiliar with death. Our culture, our families, ourselves don’t understand the multi-layered emotions that emerge. It’s easier to avoid them to address them. But they’ll still rear up. See if any of these apply to you all.”

They want me to be done grieving, but I’m not.

They feel badly that they can’t help me feel better.

It hurts to see me without my loved one.

I’m a reminder of all the pain they are feeling.

They’re afraid something like this will happen to them.

I no longer “fit” into their group.

They’re tired of hearing me telling my story over and over again.

They called a lot, but I didn’t call them back.

Maybe as I told my story, I didn’t spend much time listening to them.

In every conversation I include my loss, maybe they’re tired of that.

I’m needier than I used to be and not as fun.

I’m not as fun to be around than I used to be. ([Griefwork](#) by Fran Zamore and Ester Leutenberg, p. 107)

“Anger. That’s what rears up in me. I’ve been really sensitive. I’m a nice person but any little thing sets me off. Sometimes I don’t even recognize myself. Steve died so young and now my finances are cut in half.” admitted Sheila. “I’ve been so consumed with my own survival; bet I’ve scared off people when I lash out. I didn’t realize how I’m hurting others.”

“It’s tough to be accountable in relationships, especially when we are the ones looking for comfort. I need to be more aware my whole family, our town and church are grieving the loss of Tina. Not just me.” sighed Ted.

“People are humans. They are full of foibles and frailties. For your own sakes forgive them. Forgive yourself too. Others you will simply let go,” said Margaret. “And that’s hard. Grief affects everyone differently and you can’t control it. Hard as it is, accepting it all is the key to your peace. Do your best to care for yourself and others.”

RESTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Dr. Alan Wolfelt, founder of the Center for Loss and Life Transition, encourages to simply know that the nature of all your friendships will change. Some will fade, others will flourish. Your friends do care about you, but your loss may trigger things in them, or they may have problems of their own that you aren’t aware of.

The best way for you to respond in the face of faltering friendships is to be proactive and honest. Even though you’re the one who’s grieving. You may need to be the one to phone your friends and keep in touch. When you do talk to them, be honest. Tell them how you’re really and truly feeling and that you need and appreciate their support. If you find certain friends can’t handle your grief talk, try sticking to lighter topics with them and lean more heavily on the friends who can be present to your pain. (Wolfelt. [Understanding Your Grief](#), p. 149)

USING I STATEMENTS

It’s important to reach out. Yet, people can get defensive when you start telling them that what they are doing bothers you. Nobody makes you feel a certain way. You might feel offended because a friend didn’t call. But is your friend responsible for your feelings? Take time to first own your feelings and know you are in charge of them. Consider that things might be happening in their lives that you don’t know about. The following can be used in positive and negative situations:

Instead of saying “You never call. Don’t you realize I need you? You’re hurting me!” (Blaming)

Consider saying: “When I don’t hear from you, I feel hurt because I really need you to be with me right now. You mean a lot to me. Is anything going on with you that I don’t know about?” (Owning your feelings)

When (identify behavior), I feel (ignored, lonely, angry, happy, excited) because (share what you need or appreciate). Ask them a positive question that shows you care.

The grieving process is exhausting. You are juggling with emotions, possessions, administration, family, work, and responsibilities. You can’t manage any of it if you don’t get sleep and care for yourself. Be gentle with yourself. You will survive this. We are here for you.

-VickiJolene Lindley Reece©



If you ever need additional support beyond these articles, please reach out. As Continuous Care Coordinator I am available for a phone chat or cup of coffee. Call 319-233-6138. If you need some supportive friends, you will find them at our weekly Open On-going Grief Groups where we share our stories; there are tears, laughter and much love.

-VickiJolene Lindley Reece