

Grief Notes

February 2021

A Relationship of Memory by Linda Hopkins, Bereavement Coordinator

I believe we continue to be connected to the end of our days to the people we love who have died. Perhaps the most comforting concept I have learned in my education about grief is to view grief as a process in which the bereaved moves from a relationship of presence to a relationship of memory. It takes time and does not happen in a few weeks or even a few months. In contrast to theories of stages and tasks, the continuing bonds theory of grief suggests it is natural to have an ongoing connection to those for whom we grieve. For those who, in their hearts, know they will miss their loved one to the end of their life, being connected feels true in a way that going through stages and tasks does not.

The journey of grief is a hard one. During the early weeks and months after a death, sadness may be the closest connection to the person who has passed. Being able to take care of essentials may be the best one can hope for as the shock of the death makes many things difficult. Most people experience good and bad days with gradually more good ones than bad ones. An unsettling thing happens when a day eventually comes when one finds oneself feeling happy or having a good time. “How can I be happy when my loved one has died?” is a common thought as is worry that the loved one is being forgotten. Such thoughts are natural parts of the grief journey. For those wondering “How long is this pain going to last?” having good days is often a sign that the pain of grief will one day cease being one’s constant companion.

As one finds oneself adjusting to a changed life, feelings and memories evolve from sad to bittersweet. Perhaps one day the memories will even be felt and accepted as treasured connections to this person who has died. There will be special experiences, events, days, places, and things that bring the loved one to mind, reminding us of the connection.

This month holds Valentine’s Day, a day that can be particularly painful. As with many difficult days, the days of anticipation may be as or more painful than the day itself. It helps to have a plan. The following are suggestions people have shared with me and I hope will be useful to you.

You may remember your loved one with a candle, a photo, a card, or a letter. You may visit a special place or read a special poem. You may remember by yourself or share memories with family and friends. You might make their favorite food or watch their favorite movie. As each grief journey is personal, the activities that help us feel connected will be personal.

If you would like to read more about continuing bonds, here is a helpful link:
<https://whatsyourgrief.com/continuing-bonds-shifting-the-grief-paradigm/>.



“Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal.”

- From a headstone in Ireland