

Grief Notes

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Spirituality and Grief by George McLaughlin, Bereavement Coordinator

When death invades we often feel our lives are being torn apart and our world is suddenly turned upside down. Everything has changed. We struggle to find and accept what will eventually become our new way of life. As people go through the grieving process, emotional and physical needs are quickly recognized, but one very important area is often neglected - spiritual needs.

There are several different ways to find spiritual comfort when grieving. For many, certain religious or spiritual practices that take place shortly after the death hold deep meaning and significance. Others find their faith to be the best source for spiritual peace and solace. But for some, spiritual/religious rituals and rites have no meaning or are not in themselves sufficient to meet their spiritual needs, leaving this important area unattended.



Some questions to consider are: What brought spiritual peace and comfort before your loss? What activities or personal disciplines gave you the inner peace that may now be missing? Will the specific activities or routines once practiced still fulfill that spiritual inner need? Is it time perhaps to reestablish some of those disciplines into your adjusted life? Familiar activities and routines may be just what is needed to heal your soul and help you move further forward in the grief process.

Getting out of the house is often beneficial to recharge our spiritual batteries. A quiet ride alone in your car, going for a walk in the woods (weather permitting) or some form of physical exercise can often be helpful in meeting your inner needs. Perhaps meditation, yoga, listening to music or reading a book will comfort the soul. Others will find going away for a weekend or taking an extended trip helpful to clear their head and think. Be intentional and set aside time to do these things. These activities can often offer ample opportunity to observe the rhythms of life and death in the natural world, as well as help soothe the lingering hurts often experienced.

Attending religious services can reconnect you with a community that may offer help and support, as well as the spiritual assistance you once had. Meeting with a spiritual advisor or clergy for additional support or guidance can help get us back on track. Often a kind word, a willing listener, a shared meal, and small acts of assistance from your spiritual community will help meet such needs after your loss. If prayer gives you strength or sustains you, set aside time for it. Read spiritual texts that you find comforting, attend services, and share your circumstances with a respected religious leader who can help to properly place this loss in the context of your faith.

Recognize your spiritual needs by giving attention to your underlying beliefs and values. Don't ignore that integral part of your life. Stop and think - get refocused - have a plan. Now is the time to take care of your inner self!