



HELPING
YOU GET
THROUGH...

Wherefore comfort one
another with these words.
1 Thessalonians 4:18

DUNAMAI
ministries

OUR HOPE FOR YOU



"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29).

All scriptures quotations unless otherwise indicated are taken from the Holy Bible New King James Version. Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers.

A sudden and tragic loss often accompanies the need to make very serious decisions while still suffering from the disbelief of what has happened. These decisions may include using services with which you are unfamiliar and involve matters that you have not previously considered. It is our hope that this booklet will ease your burden in some small way by providing information that may be helpful to you now and in the coming weeks. Our thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time. The scriptures teach that, "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart" (Psalm 34:18). During this difficult time draw near to God as He promises to draw near to you (James 4:8).

DUNAMAI Ministries Incorporated, a non-profit organization, in cooperation with San Diego Hospice & Palliative Care has compiled this information with the intent to provide those who have suffered a tragic loss the most useful, accurate and up to date information possible. The information in this booklet was deemed reliable at the time of printing. We welcome suggestions and corrections.

Please contact us at:

DUNAMAI
ministries
P.O. Box 711173
Santee, CA 92072-1173

[Suggested Donation \\$4.95 to cover costs](#)

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAPLAIN



As Chaplain for the Medical Examiner's Office I have responded to the scenes of many different kinds of deaths. Most of the responses are due to sudden or traumatic circumstances. My heart aches for the families we serve who are in shock and devastated, many of whom do not know what to do or where to turn for help. The desire to help direct families with the practical and spiritual aspects of the coming days after a death is what led to this project. This booklet was developed to provide emotional, educational and spiritual support, information and referral services that will help direct the survivors during this most difficult time. This can be a time of fear, apprehension and need. The Lord promises that He is our refuge and strength and a **very present help** in trouble (Psalm 46:1). Please consider that as you look through this booklet, as in the coming days and weeks you may experience thoughts and feelings that are new to you. However, many are normal reactions for normal people during abnormal circumstances.

In times of loss it is normal for people to question many of their core values and relationships. As such, a crisis of faith may develop where long held beliefs and traditions are questioned. However, healthy transitions over time in the grief process often lead to a faith that is transformed with new meaning and depth. Always remember that grief is a process that lasts over a variance of time.

DUNAMAI Ministries was developed in order to be a support to those that have experienced a sudden and traumatic death in the family and provides free services such as licensed counseling, financial and credit counseling and credit services. We also refer services for Crime Victims Compensation, various survivor support programs for homicide, sudden infant death, suicide and general bereavement. Please know that our thoughts and prayers are with you and yours. May God Himself hold you in His loving arms as He ministers His grace during this difficult time. Please feel free to contact us if we can assist you in any way.

Joe Davis
Executive Director
DUNAMAI Ministries
619.449.4532
ChaplainJoeD@cox.net

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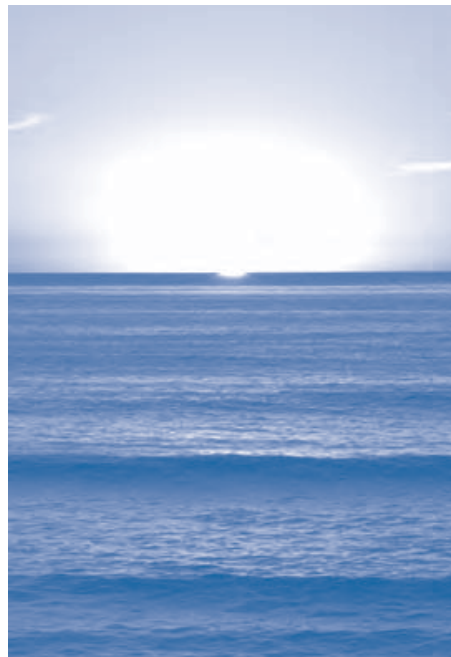


HOPE AS YOU BEGIN TO HEAL



"Have mercy upon me O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed" (Psalm 6:2).

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION MAY BE OFTEN HELPFUL AS YOU PROCEED WITH YOUR GRIEF PROCESS. Remember, there is no timetable for you to grieve and mourn. This process is as individual as you are and is influenced by many things. It is your process and cannot be dictated by those around you, no matter how well intentioned. Since grief follows no set pattern, the following pages are intended to be used as a resource and as a guideline for you. Use what you find helpful and seek the support of caring, loving friends, family, pastors and professional counselors to help you through the grieving process.



WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT



"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13).

ALTHOUGH THE GRIEVING PROCESS IS INDIVIDUAL, THERE ARE SOME COMMON GRIEF RESPONSES THAT MAY BE HELPFUL FOR YOU TO KNOW. These are the normal and expected reactions to your loss. Sometimes it is difficult for others, who are concerned about you, to see these behaviors in you. Show them this booklet to reassure them that what you are experiencing is normal.

- You may sleep a great deal, or be unable to sleep
- Your appetite may increase or decrease
- It may be difficult to concentrate, or remember things, or your judgment may be impaired
- You may lack motivation to get even the most mundane daily tasks completed
- You may be very irritable or "on edge"
- You may have the need to tell the story of the death over and over again
- You may experience unpredictable crying
- You may be fearful even in situations you are familiar with and previously felt safe
- You may or may not feel like connecting with friends, family or other social contacts
- You may begin to question your faith

HELPING YOUR CHILDREN



"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).

COMMON REACTIONS OF CHILDREN

FEAR AND ANXIETY • Children are afraid that the trauma will happen again, and that they or their family will be injured or killed. A child's most central fear is that he or she will be left all alone. These fears are very real to a child, even if they seem exaggerated to adults.

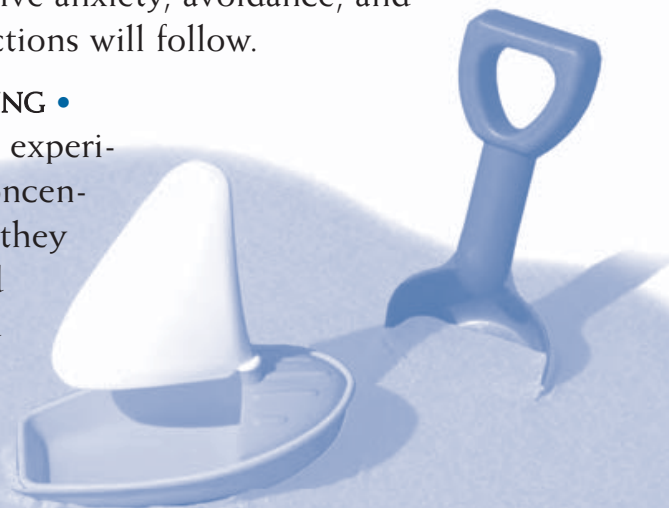
"CHILDISH" OR REGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR • Children's fear and anxiety may cause them to act younger than their age. They may begin behavior such as bed-wetting, thumb-sucking, and being very clingy or afraid of strangers. An older child, who has been independent in his or her activities away from the family, may wish to spend more time at home. A child does not want to act immaturely, and may not even realize that he or she is behaving like this, but the anxiety may temporarily disrupt his or her normal, more mature behavior.

BEDTIME PROBLEMS • Frequently children show their anxiety and fear through having nightmares or being afraid of sleeping alone. They may develop fears of the dark or have difficulty falling or staying asleep at night.

PHYSICAL REACTIONS • Some children have stomachaches, headaches, nausea, eating problems or other physical symptoms of distress. These can be in response to fear, guilt, anger or feeling vulnerable to future tragedies.

"TRIGGER" RESPONSES • Sometimes a child will associate a particular smell, sound, object or activity with the trauma. Whenever he is exposed to that reminder, excessive anxiety, avoidance, and sometimes physical reactions will follow.

PROBLEMS WITH THINKING • Children of all ages can experience difficulties with concentration. Many find that they are easily distracted and feel somewhat confused and disoriented.



DEVELOPMENTAL REACTIONS SEEN IN CHILDREN

BIRTH TO 2 YEARS • When children are preverbal and experience a trauma, they do not have the words to describe the event or their feelings. They can, however, retain memories of particular sights, sounds or smells.

Infants may react to trauma by being irritable, crying more than usual or wanting to be held and cuddled. As they get older, their play may involve acting out elements of the traumatic event that occurred several years in the past and was seemingly long forgotten.

PRESCHOOL - 2 TO 6 YEARS • Preschool children often feel helpless and powerless in the face of an overwhelming event. Because of their age and small size, they lack the ability to protect themselves or others. As a result, they feel intense fear and insecurity.

Preschoolers cannot grasp the concept of permanent loss. They see consequences as being reversible. In the weeks following a traumatic event,

HELPING YOUR CHILDREN



WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP A CHILD?

KEEP FAMILY ROUTINES • Children benefit from the family routine of meals, activities, and bedtimes being kept as close to normal as possible. This allows a child to feel more security and control. As much as possible, children should stay with people with whom they feel most familiar.

INDULGE SPECIAL NEEDS • Allow a traumatized child to be more dependent on you for a period of time following the trauma. This may involve more holding or hugs than usual, not sleeping alone, having the light left on, returning to a favorite teddy bear or blanket or permission to be clingy rather than socially outgoing.

TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED • Children express their feelings in different ways. Some children will be numb, withdrawn, and unable to talk about the event. Others will experience intense spurts of sadness or anger and recognition of what has happened, and other periods of denial when they act as if the event has not occurred. Others will express themselves non-verbally in drawings or play that may be confusing to parents.

Children are often confused about the facts and their feelings: talking can help clarify what they understand and what they need to hear. If you're unsure how to help your children please seek professional help.

SPEND FOCUS TIME TOGETHER • In special times of need, children benefit from more attentive time together with their loved ones. Spend time reading the Bible together and praying with your children as you seek to give guidance at this season of transition.

HELPING YOUR CHILDREN



HERE ARE SOME IDEAS FOR TALKING WITH THE CHILD IN YOUR HOME, CLASSROOM OR NEIGHBORHOOD:

- Notice when your child has questions and wants to talk
- Listen to your child's feelings and accept them, even if they are different from yours
- Give honest, simple, brief answers to your child's questions
- Make sure that your child understands your answers and the meaning that you intend
- Use words or phrases that won't confuse your child or make the world more frightening (e.g. using "sleep" for death can cause a child to be afraid of going to bed; associating the concept of punishment with a disastrous event may cause a child to feel personally threatened)
- Create opportunities for your children to talk with each other about what happened and how they are feeling
- Be especially loving and supportive; more than anyone else, your child needs your understanding at this time

"One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts" (Psalm 145:4).

COMMON REACTIONS OF ADULTS



"When my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the Rock that is higher than I" (Psalm 61:2).

PHYSICAL • Stomach problems, vomiting, diarrhea, sweating, rapid pulse, numbness, startle reactions, trouble breathing, chest/head pains, general weakness.

PSYCHOLOGICAL • Helplessness, powerlessness, hopelessness, sense of injustice, vulnerability, feeling not yourself, anger, feelings of revenge, depression, sadness, nervousness, frustrations, embarrassment, guilt.

RELATIONAL • Withdrawing/clinging to others, being demanding of others, changes in sexual activity, breakdown in trust, suspiciousness, fear of others.

COGNITIVE • Too many thoughts at once, distortion of time, flashbacks, thoughts of suicide/homicide, euphoria or guilt about being alive, confusion, uncertainty, hyper-vigilance, hallucinations.

BEHAVIORAL • Moodiness, changes in how you usually act, silence/talkativeness, crying, calmness, hysteria, dangerous/destructive behaviors, sleep disturbance.

SPIRITUAL • Loss of/clinging to faith, doubts about God's love, withdrawal from church, despair, questioning of beliefs or meaning of life, religious reappraisal, sense of abandonment, issues of forgiveness.

For any physical complaints, it is usually important that you check in with your physician and not assume that they are related to what you are experiencing. While all of the reactions above are normal, you may find yourself leaning toward behaviors that are harmful to yourself or others; drug or alcohol abuse, overeating, lashing out. For any behaviors such as these it is beneficial to see a professional who can guide you through a healthy grief process. It is essential to understand that these are normal reactions in normal people responding to a very difficult and out of the ordinary season of life.

FACTORS AFFECTING YOUR RESPONSES



MANY FACTORS AFFECT OUR RESPONSES TO ANY SITUATION. Your responses to this sudden and maybe shocking loss are yours alone. It is best not to compare your responses to those of others as different factors apply to each individual, even when they are grieving the same loss. Some of the factors that contribute to one's responses include:

- Age and developmental stage
- Relationship to the person who died
- Cultural, ethnic and religious background
- Support an individual has available
- Attitudes of the community to this type of loss

If you find that you are experiencing any thoughts, feelings or behaviors that you are uncertain about, it is helpful to contact your pastor, a professional grief counselor or other trusted non-judgmental and experienced friend or professional who can help you in your process.

You may also find great comfort and assistance in the reading of Scripture. At the end of this booklet is a list of Biblical passages that you might find beneficial.

BASIC NEEDS OF THE BEREAVED



"A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

HOW CAN FRIENDS HELP...

A BALANCE BETWEEN COMPANIONSHIP AND PRIVACY. The bereaved need time to reflect on their feelings as well as time to share their feelings.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS GRIEF WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT OR JUDGMENT. An emotionally safe environment where the bereaved can open up and express feelings if they choose.

RECOGNITION OF THE MANY SYMPTOMS THAT MAY OCCUR AS A RESULT OF INTENSE GRIEVING. Loss of sleep, appetite, strength, motivation and inconsistencies in behavior are all normal after a loss. They resemble that which accompanies a serious illness.

SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE IN BECOMING SOCIALLY REACTIVATED. Someone who can assist them when they are ready to reenter a social world and someone who respects their need to reenter on their own time schedule. Provide assistance with a clear communication that refusal is acceptable.

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE WITH BUSINESS AND LEGAL MATTERS. Someone to help them think clearly to settle important issues and to plan for the immediate future.

ALLOW A FIRM FOCUS ON THE LOSS WITHOUT BEING MADE TO FEEL THEY HAVE A PHYSICAL OR MENTAL ILLNESS. It is often hard to watch someone you care about be in crisis or suffer a loss. Remember the gift of your acceptance is special.

ABOVE ALL, THE BEREAVED MAY NEED THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL AND RETELL THEIR LOSS EXPERIENCE. An active listener can dramatically facilitate the healing process. Be patient and non-judgmental. Help them to draw their own conclusions. Sharing is healing.

HOW A COUNSELOR CAN HELP



YOUR LIFE NEED NOT BE CRIPPLED BY YOUR GRIEF, although in the beginning it feels that way. A few sessions with a pastor or professionally trained Christian grief counselor can help you resolve any disabling issues (i.e. anger, panic, guilt, despair, revenge, fear or any other issues that limit your functioning).

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS TO EASE THE PAIN



ACCEPT THE GRIEF. Roll with the waves of grief, do not feel you need to be brave. Take time to cry. This applies to men and women.

READ SCRIPTURE. Spend time reflecting on the scriptural comforts in the Word of God.

FELLOWSHIP. Stay connected with your community of faith for on-going support and comfort.

PRAYER. Openly share your heart with the Lord and listen to His still small voice as He draws you close to Himself.

PURPOSEFUL WORK. Keeping busy in frantic activity is not helpful, however doing purposeful work that occupies your mind can be helpful.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL NEEDS. Eating well, exercising regularly and resting periodically can all help restore your body's physical needs.

JOIN A GROUP OF OTHERS WHO ARE MOURNING. Your circle of friends may have changed for now, and you will need new friends who understand the experience you have been through. See page 18.

POSTPONE MAJOR DECISIONS. It is difficult to concentrate and make decisions when we have suffered a loss. Hold off any major decisions until a time when you feel more like yourself.

KEEP A JOURNAL. If inclined toward writing, keeping a journal will help get your thoughts and feelings out. It also records your progress.

TASKS OF GRIEF



TASKS OF GRIEF ARE LIKE SIGN POSTS that can be found along your journey of grief through the grace of God. You will carve your own path on this journey, accomplishing these tasks in your own order and at your own pace. Look at these as tasks, not stages. Tasks mean that you can have all of the feelings you feel, no matter what task you are facing. You can revisit tasks as often as needed or you may visit one of the tasks only momentarily. There is no order in which tasks must be completed and no time limit; they are only guideposts along your journey of faith.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE LOSS. A natural defense mechanism for human beings is to initially deny the reality of a loss. At some level it is so unreal and at another all too real. You may find yourself searching for your loved one, or seeing them in crowds. This is normal. After some time has passed, you will encounter enough reminders of the loss, and begin to slowly believe that in fact, your loved one has died. Still, even after weeks, there may be momentary forgetfulness and then finally a slow acceptance.

UNDERSTAND AND BEGIN TO MAKE SENSE OF WHAT HAPPENED. The death of a loved one changes our lives in many ways. Making sense of the events that led up to the death and the death itself will take time and thought. Through this process your understanding increases as you grasp the full meaning of the loss. There is an emotional and intellectual acceptance about the reality of the loss.

IDENTIFY, EXPERIENCE, EXPRESS AND GET VALIDATION FOR ALL REACTIONS TO THE LOSS IN CONSTRUCTIVE WAYS. You may experience a unique spectrum of grief reactions including emotions such as despair, anguish, guilt, relief and sadness. Grieving fully involves identifying and expressing your thoughts and feelings. There are a variety of ways to express yourself. You may want to talk with a trusted confidante, write in a journal or log or physically express yourself through exercise or other movement. Healing involves receiving support and acceptance from the Lord as well as from yourself and others through this process.