

## First-Aid for Difficult Emotions

In times of great loss, you may be confronted with unfamiliar or very intense emotions. A natural response is to keep a lid on them, but sooner or later suppressing emotions takes a physical and emotional toll. Try this First-Aid plan for handling difficult emotions and hopefully they will lessen and the healing can begin.

### Accept whatever you are feeling.

There is nothing wrong with any feeling you have, whether it is relief, envy, guilt, anger or rage. Not accepting your feelings creates tension and an inner tug of war. Pay attention to physical cues. These are often the first signs of suppressed feelings, a lump in the throat, a knot in the stomach, a tensed jaw.

### Identify Your Feelings.

Try to be specific about what you feel. "I feel bad" is fairly vague, whereas "I feel discouraged about the slow progress I'm making" is more helpful. When you name your feelings you are less likely to feel overwhelmed by them. Some common emotions after a loss are sadness, despair, loneliness, fear, relief, guilt and anger.

### Do something with your feelings.

- ❖ Cry- let the dam break
- ❖ Walk, run, or go to the gym
- ❖ Beat a pillow or punching bag
- ❖ Tear up an old phone book or catalog
- ❖ Talk to someone who can listen without judging
- ❖ Depict your feelings with crayons, magic markers, or paint
- ❖ Write about your feeling, even if it's anger towards the one who died
- ❖ Tell others when you have calmed down, how you feel when they offended you.

For example: "I felt hurt when you said I should clear out his closet."

