

October 2022
Volume 4, Issue 4



Bereavement Newsletter

What is Self-Compassion?

By: Kristin Palmieri, M.A., LMHC, LPC,
Bereavement Counselor

I often tell bereavement clients it's important to have self-compassion when grieving a loss. Many people don't fully understand what it means to have self-compassion during their grief journey.

Self-compassion is the acknowledgement you have been through an emotionally hard time as a caretaker or watching a loved one decline in their illness. Self-compassion means needing to take extra good care of yourself; by being kind to yourself, recognizing your strengths, mindful when you may need patience with yourself and others.

Grief is not an easy journey and it's emotionally and physically exhausting. In grief, it's important not to lecture oneself on the way things 'should be', it's important to avoid self-blame, and refrain from allowing your inner critical voice to dominate during these vulnerable times of healing. Instead, it's important to schedule activities particularly enjoyable, participate in exercise of your choice, eat healthy, get enough sleep and speak kindly about yourself.

Dr. Kristin Neff (2022) includes three concepts for explaining self-compassion: Self Kindness vs. Self Judgement, Common humanity vs. isolation, and Mindfulness vs. Over-Identification. Visit her website for more information on self-compassion and being kind to yourself.

Neff, K. (2022, August 31) *Self-Compassion*.
<https://self-compassion.org>

WHAT'S NEW

NEW INTEGRATIVE GRIEF
SUPPORT GROUP

"Light for the Journey"

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

An evening zoom
bereavement support group
meeting twice per month.

TO REGISTER CALL
(845) 561-6111

www.hospiceoforange.com

Helpful Ways Parents Can Support Their Children During Grieving

As a parent it is important to allow all feelings. Validate feelings of sadness and anger. Tell your child it is okay to cry. It is okay to feel sad. **Normalize** their experience.

Encourage talking and not acting out. Maintain house rules and stick to a routine. Increase your child's ability to exercise. Whether it is going to the park or playing outside. Exercise helps stress flow through us. Exercise is linked to better mental health.

Provide security. Many children become anxious or may display separation anxiety. They become worried that their caregiver is going to die next. Reassure your child you are there for them. If your child is physically in school, it is a good idea to reach out to a teacher or guidance counselor and create a plan, so that if your child is having a hard day, there is a plan in place to for them to talk about their feelings with an adult in a safe space. This builds skills into the child to be able to self-regulate their emotions and feel more in control.

Educate younger children with the science, remind them that death is not necessarily traumatic, it is when a person's body stops working. Emphasize the biology and minimize the feeling of emotional abandonment. If children are told someone is sleeping, or went away, the child's tendency will be to worry at night, not want to sleep, and fear separations. This perspective could easily cause nighttime anxiety. Be simple, gentle, and honest with children.

It is helpful to include children in memorials and funerals and have them participate at their comfort level. Children often prefer to draw a picture or select an item to present to the casket or front table as part of their **personal contribution**. Prepare children for what to expect at the memorial/ funeral and explain to them that people express their grief in different ways. Plan and assign a family-friend/ caring adult to be responsible for the child during the ceremony – so the grieving parent can focus on their own grief, and the child can regulate their involvement according to their comfort. Adults surrounding children influence and model grieving for the children. Demonstrating healthy expressions of grief will encourage children to do the same. Anyone experiencing struggle coping with grief is encouraged to seek help. Help could be an adult support group or individual bereavement counseling. A healthy caregiver equates to a healthy child.

Remember together & cry together. Share good memories about the person who died, and how the person will be remembered. **Reminisce**, look at pictures together. Model the natural sadness that is experienced as the family remembers together. Consider making a visual memorial.



Common Reactions to Grief

One of the many disturbing aspects of grieving is experiencing a variety of unexpected or seemingly uncontrollable emotions and/or physical sensations. Often individuals who mourn, fear that they are “going crazy” or somehow “abnormal” in how they are responding to their loss. It is important for the bereaved to have others validate or normalize these reactions to grief. The following list includes many of the normal responses to the death of a loved one:

1. Spontaneous crying, often at times when there is no apparent trigger. Individuals sometimes are frightened by the unpredictability of tears.
2. Mood swings, where a person’s feelings change very quickly. Feelings may range from intense sadness to guilt to anger to numbness. Some of the guilt may be related to feeling angry with the person who had died for leaving.
3. Disbelief and denial of the loss. Awakening and expecting the person who died to be alive; hearing his or her voice or briefly seeing his or her face or sensing his or her presence.
4. Difficulty in concentration and memory. The bereaved person may not be able to concentrate on reading material; may lose his or her train of thought in the middle of a sentence; may walk into a room and forget why; may lose things or forget appointments. This response seems especially surprising to the grieving persons.
5. Physical reactions may include tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest; an empty or nauseated feeling in the stomach; lack of desire to eat; difficulty sleeping or awakening very early without being able to go back to sleep; dreams about the loved one; lack of energy or fatigue.
6. Experiencing an intense preoccupation with the life of the person who has died, including the need to talk about the loved one and the story of his or her illness and death; assuming the person’s mannerisms or traits.
7. Feeling awkwardness with others, not knowing what to say in response to “How are you?” and feeling uncertain as to whether others are interested in the person’s grief. Feeling isolated and uncomfortable in social situations where everyone is expected to be happy and celebrating.
8. Needing to review the last days, months, or years of life of the person who has died to try to determine if things should have been done or said differently; trying to understand the “whys” or “should have” and feeling some guilt at not having done more.

I Am Learning How To Live

by Jamey Wysocki

I am learning how to live
In a new way
Since that day
You were taken away.

I am learning how to live
With the things left unsaid
Knowing I got to say them
With every tear that I shed.

I am learning how to live
By embracing the pain
Knowing that you live on
Through the memories that remain.

I am learning how to live
Knowing I will never again see your face
And I have peace knowing
You're in a better place.

I am learning how to live
Knowing you're in God's care
It gives me the strength to move on.
And makes the pain much easier to bear.

<http://elliesway.org> (2022)