

My CARELETTERTM

Guiding *Me* through life's passages.

Aspen Mortuary

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

by Dr. Bill Webster

The words of the doctor seemed to have such a hollow ring to them as they impacted my numb and disbelieving brain. I felt as if an invisible hand was pushing me off my chair. I struggled to grasp what I was being told. The whole situation had an air of unreality about it. It was like a bad dream. I expected to wake up at any second and realize to my relief that this wasn't really happening. But it was happening. My wife, a young woman in her thirties, had died of a heart attack. The days that followed would be full of new challenges, not the least of which was being a single parent to my two sons, then 9 and 7 years of age. But the biggest challenge of all was not as immediately apparent.

I was beginning a grief process. I didn't even know there was such a thing as a grief process, far less how to deal with it. There is not much understanding of grief in our society. We have not learned what IS normal after a significant loss... what we should expect, what emotions we will experience, how long the process continues. Many

people, albeit with good intentions, try to rationalize the situation, with phrases like "it's a blessing in disguise," or "maybe it's for the best." These statements may or may not be true. But for us, it doesn't feel like a blessing. To us, it's NOT for the best... in fact, we may feel it is the worst thing that could have happened.

Perhaps you have experienced a significant loss recently. I wish I could sit down and listen to you tell me about the special relationship you had with the person, whatever that relationship happened to be. Whether you have experienced the loss of a spouse, a parent, a child, or the loss of a relative, friend or colleague, whenever we experience a loss, we experience grief.

This article is designed to help us understand grief and to validate the many emotions we may experience after a loss. Grief is normal, yet saying it is normal does not minimize its difficulty. Grief is one of life's most challenging experiences, and I hope reading this will help you cope with it.

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