Take my hand
and lead me to salvation
Take my love,
for love is everlasting
and remember the truth
that once was spoken,
to love another person
is to see the face of God.

—LES MISERABLES
We at Hospice of the Sacred Heart are committed to you — the family member, the caregiver, the friend, the significant other — as you continue your journey after the death of a loved one. Bereavement refers to the process of grief and mourning that occurs with the delivery of any bad news. Remember that grief is a natural, normal and expected response to a loss. It is helpful if bereavement care starts as a patient begins hospice services.

Studies have proven that early intervention with hospice care is not only beneficial to the patient in achieving the type of death that is most desirable to him/her, but also for caregivers and loved ones to identify symptoms of grief and to provide bereavement support early.

Many do not realize that bereavement services continue for at least one year following the death of a patient under hospice care. This can be a difficult time of adjustment that affects multiple aspects of the survivor’s life. Ongoing bereavement counseling can help survivors adjust to the multitude of changes that occur in their lives following their loss. Rest assured, that with Hospice of the Sacred Heart, you truly are not alone, and that our entire staff is committed to helping you discover and cope with your “new normal.”
Mourning

Mourning is the outward expression of grief. It is usually based on the cultural, religious or personal belief systems of a person. Examples include funeral services, visiting the grave site, keeping a journal, making a photo album, scattering ashes or observing Shiva. Remember that mourning is also a very personal experience; there is no right or wrong way to express your loss.

COMFORT GOALS OF CARE

- If confronted with a rush of memory, allow yourself the time to recall that memory as fully as you wish.
- Often taking a walk, calling a friend, or writing in your journal can be helpful.
- Forgetfulness, poor concentration and distraction are common to the grieving process.
- It’s okay to feel angry, scared, empty or lost — it’s your loss and your feelings.
- Remember grieving is a process; feelings may change day to day.
- It’s okay to acknowledge your loss... you don’t have to pretend that everything is perfect.
- If you need help, call your hospice program — we are here to help. You are not alone with the grieving process.

Comfort goals of care
Grief

Grief is a bereaved person’s internal response to a personal loss. It is often described as a heaviness that is not easily lifted. It sometimes is so pronounced that it affects a person’s physical, behavioral, social and/or spiritual selves. Often it can even mimic a physical illness.

Normal grief is found in the majority of survivors, and describes a process that eventually lessens as a person adjusts to loss and discovers their “new normal.” Grief is not something one recovers from, because the loss can never be replaced or recovered. You cannot return to the person you were before the loss; rather many describe their lives after the loss as different, or a “new normal.”

Abnormal or complicated grief is observed in a very small minority of people. Often, these survivors of a loss will exhibit certain symptoms such as depression, social withdrawal, dangerous behaviors, or persistent thoughts of suicide that will require active intervention by trained professionals.

But remember that the grieving process is a very personal experience. There is no right way or wrong way to grieve or mourn the loss of a loved one. Give yourself the opportunity and the time to grieve in your own way and at your own pace.
Five Myths of Bereavement

1. **GRIEF AND MOURNING ARE THE SAME EXPERIENCE.**
   
   **Truth:** Actually they are not the same. Grief is an internal response representing thoughts and feelings to a loss. Mourning is the outward process one takes after a loss, such as funeral arrangements, crying, grave site visitations at the holidays, etc.

2. **GRIEF OCCURS IN AN ORDERLY AND PREDICTABLE PATTERN.**
   
   **Truth:** The grieving process is as unique as the individual. Everyone will feel different emotions and express them in a very personal way. Grieving is normal, but there is not a normal way to grieve.

3. **ONE SHOULD MOVE AWAY FROM GRIEF, NOT TOWARD IT.**
   
   **Truth:** Often grief is viewed as something to avoid or to overcome. Outward signs of grief are often perceived as a weakness or a sign of self-pity. The truth is that grief needs to be experienced, not repressed — so that true healing can take place.

4. **THE GOAL IS TO GET OVER THE GRIEF AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**
   
   **Truth:** One needs to mourn at their own pace. Instead of focusing on getting over grief, we should focus on growing through the grief.

5. **TEARS ARE A SIGN OF WEAKNESS.**
   
   **Truth:** Crying is a healthy way of releasing tension and emotion. It also communicates to others the need to be comforted. Those who show tears, show their willingness to work through their grief.

— ANGELA MORROW, RN
“5 myths about Grief and Mourning”
Oh heart, if one should say to you that the soul perishes like the body, answer that the flower withers, but the seed remains.

—KAHLIL GIBRAN
Needs of Grieving Children

Although the vast majority of patients who receive hospice services are elderly adults, these services can accommodate all age groups from infants through the elderly. Children can be the recipients of hospice care or be the survivors of an adult parent who died under hospice services. Approximately 1.5 million children live in a single parent family because of the death of a parent. One out of 20 children will suffer the loss of one or both parents. These statistics don’t account for the loss of a “parent figure” such as a grandparent, significant other or friends that provide care.

Considering these numbers, the need for support and counseling of bereaved children is necessary, if not critical. The good news is that there is growing support for this bereaved group. We encourage physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, educators and chaplains to recognize the needs of the pediatric bereaved and refer for support and counseling as necessary.

Remember that studies show that unresolved grief in children can put them as risk for depression and anxiety as adults.

**UNDERSTANDING THE FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN AND GRIEF:**

- Children grieve at any age. Grief can be manifested in many ways depending on age. It is common for children to grieve intensely and then take a break to play — this is normal.
- Allow children to decide if they want to go to funerals. Allow children to grieve differently, but tell them the truth and support their choices.
- Children, as adults, never truly get over a loss. They too need to live with the loss and adapt to a new reality, a new normal.
- Remember that children are resilient. Adequate support and counseling can help them deal with a significant loss and to grieve appropriately.
- Communicating with children is helpful, but don’t forget that they also respond well to art, play, music and dance.
So please remember that we at Hospice of the Sacred Heart are committed to all the needs of you and your family members’ end of life journey. The journey does not end at the death of a patient, but can continue on for years into the future. Supportive care and counseling through our comprehensive bereavement services can help you to find your new normal, and to live a productive and meaningful life after the loss. Call us at any time for support, advice and to find out about the array of bereavement services that we provide. Remember also that our bereavement support is included in your hospice benefit and that there is never a charge for any of these important services. We welcome the opportunity to provide comfort, care, hope and choice to you and your family as you travel the journey of a serious or terminal illness.
Bereavement support groups meet on a regular basis at the Hospice of the Sacred Heart Center for Education. The Bereavement Program helps survivors to understand the grief process and to learn effective ways of coping with the emotional responses and the common feelings related to the loss of a loved one. Hospice staff members facilitate the bereavement support groups.

Individual bereavement counseling is offered to patient’s family members, caregivers, and friends as needed.

Two Interfaith Memorial Services are held annually. The first Interfaith Memorial Service is held in early spring to connect the season of renewed hope with the need for renewed hope that our deceased patient’s family members will be at peace, freed from their physical pain and suffering.

The second Interfaith Memorial Service is held during the month of December. Since many major religions observe holy days at this time, the pastoral team endeavors to include those observances in an ecumenical way.

It is the goal of each of these sacred gatherings to bring some peace and consolation to our grieving family members; to remember, honor and celebrate the lives of our deceased patients.

The Dragonfly Program is especially designed for children and their parents. The main focus is to teach coping skills and further the parents’ ability to help their children.

Our grief education series, titled “Life Has Changed,” is a free six-week program for widows and widowers. This series offers education and emotional support dealing with the process of grief and mourning. The goal is to help surviving spouses adjust to the loss of their partner — to find the new normal.
“Death leaves a heartache no one can heal... Love leaves a memory no one can steal...”

— FROM HEADSTONE IN IRELAND
SUGGESTED READINGS

- “Dying Well; Peace & Possibilities at the End of Life”  
  BY IRA BYOCK
- “5 myths about Grief and Mourning”  
  BY ANGELA MORROW, RN
- “Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope, & Healing Your Heart”  
  BY ALAN D. WOLFERT
- “Understanding the Special Awareness, Needs, Communications of the Dying”  
  BY MAGGIE CALLAHAN
- “A Grief Observed”  
  BY C.S.LEWIS
- “The Wheel of Life: A Memoir of Living and Dying”  
  BY ELISABETH KUBLER ROSS

SUGGESTED WEBSITES

- www.hospicesacredheart.org
- www.centerforloss.com
- www.seriousillness.org
- www.agingwithdignity.org
- www.griefnet.org
- www.nhpco.org