

## Grief – You Know You are Getting Better When...

- You get in touch with the finality of death. You know that your loved one is gone and will never return.
- You can remember both pleasant and unpleasant memories. In early grief, memories are painful because they remind you of how much you have lost. Now it feels good to remember, and you look for people to share your memories.
- You can enjoy time alone and feel comfortable. You no longer need to have someone with you all the time.
- You can drive somewhere by yourself without crying the whole time.
- You are less sensitive to the comments of others. You realize that painful comments made by others are made in ignorance.
- You look forward to holidays. Once dreaded occasions can now be anticipated with excitement.
- You can reach out to help someone else in a similar situation.
- The music you shared with the one you lost is no longer painful to hear.
- You realize that some time has passed in which you didn't think of your loved one. When this first happens, you may panic, thinking, "I am forgetting". This is not true. You will never forget. You are giving yourself permission to go on with life and your loved one would want you to do this.
- You can enjoy a good joke and have a good laugh without feeling guilty.
- Your patterns of eating, sleeping, and exercise return to what they were before the loss.
- You are no longer constantly tired.
- You have developed a routine or a new schedule in your daily life that does not include your loved one.
- You can concentrate on a good book or a favorite television program. You can even retain information.
- You no longer have to make daily or weekly trips to the cemetery. You now feel comfortable going once a month or on occasions.
- You can find things to be thankful for.
- You can establish new and healthy relationships. New friends are now a part of your life and you look forward to time with them.
- You feel confident again.
- You can organize and plan for the future.
- You can accept things as they are and not keep trying to return things to what they were before.
- You have patience with yourself through "grief attacks." You recognize that they are becoming further apart and less painful.
- You look forward to getting up in the morning.
- The vacated roles that your loved one filled in your life are now being filled by yourself or others. When a loved one dies it leaves many "holes" in your life. Now these holes are being filled with other people and activities, although, some will remain empty. You are comfortable with these changes.
- You can take the energy and time spent thinking about your loss and put those energies elsewhere.
- You acknowledge your new life and even discover personal growth from experiencing grief.

"He'd lived long enough to know that everyone handled grief in different ways, and little by little, they all seemed to accept their new lives."

— Nicholas Sparks, *The Choice*