



# TO YOUR HEALTH

Carleton-Willard Village Out-Patient Clinic - 100 Old Billerica Rd., Bedford, MA



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## **GOOD GRIEF**

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**How do we grieve differently after losing a loved one when the death comes after a long illness as opposed to a sudden, unexpected death? Neither scenario is easy, but the road to healing may look quite different in each case. Even though there is no “right way” to grieve, having familiarity with some common phases of grief can be a helpful roadmap in navigating one’s own process.**

**Losing a loved one after a prolonged illness brings its own unique challenges. We may experience Anticipatory Grief as we watch the person we love suffer loss after loss. They may lose their ability to be independent, to walk, to think clearly, to feed themselves, and the list goes on. Hopefully there is time to make peace with the person’s imminent death and come to some kind of closure, though this is not always the case.**

**When a death is sudden, there may not be time to prepare, to say goodbye, or to resolve unfinished business. We may be blindsided and shock can leave us feeling numb for a time and interfere with our ability to integrate the loss.**

**When the world recently learned of the death of comedian Robin Williams, it seemed that we collectively gasped in shock and surprise. The news media**

**played out our national grief by ruminating on his life’s work. This need to review our memories of the person is a natural part of the healing process.**

**There are common phases of the grieving process. Not everyone may experience each phase and they may not occur in this order, but the process is often similar. Awareness of these phases can be comforting to one who is experiencing grief. According to John Bowlby (1907-1990), a British psychologist and psychiatrist, and later his colleague Colin Murray Parkes, four phases of grief are:**

- Shock and Numbness - the sense that the loss is not real and seems impossible to accept**
- Yearning and searching - we long for the comfort we used to have with the person and may appear preoccupied with them.**
- Despair and disorganization - we accept that everything has changed and life feels like it will never make sense again without this person.**
- Re-organization and recovery - we slowly start to rebuild, realize that life can still be positive even after a loss, and we begin to establish new patterns and goals.**



**Grief is dynamic. It is natural to oscillate between these phases. Each phase can have its own timing and calls for us to work through the feelings that arise. Experts in the field of grief tell us that every loss is a multiple loss. We not only lose the person we love, we also lose who we were in relation to that person and our role is changed forever.**

**Dr. Teresa Schaer from Drexel School of Medicine offers some suggestions for coping with grief:**

- **Accept your feelings - it's okay to cry or be angry**
- **Lean into the pain - the only way out is through; don't avoid the feelings**
- **Be patient with yourself - grief takes its own time**
- **Ask for and accept help - join a support group, reach out to a friend**
- **Be good to yourself (without feeling guilty)**
  - **Keep a journal**
  - **Exercise**
  - **Plan activities and quiet time**
  - **Get adequate rest**
  - **Become involved with others**
  - **Read books on grief**

**Signs to watch for if it's time to seek professional help for grief are: inability to sleep, increased irritability/anxiety, loss of appetite/weight loss, prolonged crying, inability to get out of bed or function. These factors can be directly related to signs and symptoms of depression.**

**One key to healing is to remain compassionate with oneself while riding the waves of grief. Keep in mind that we can't fix or cure grief. It is a normal process we all go through after suffering loss. And there is no right way to grieve; each person grieves differently.**

*When you are sorrowful  
look again in your heart,*

*and you shall see that in truth  
you are weeping for that*

*which has been your delight.*

*- Kahlil Gibran*

#### **HEALTH EDUCATION LECTURES**

**Our monthly Health Education talks are resuming on Wednesday, September 17th from 10:30—11:30 am in the Auditorium Center. Please join us for a talk by Dr. Judith Fine-Edelstein entitled, "Neuropathy 2014: Diagnosis and Treatment". Dr. Fine-Edelstein is an experienced neurologist who often evaluates people at the Village Clinic. She brings considerable knowledge to the subject of neuropathy that affects many people's feet and hands.**