

# Light of Day



*"Hope is grief's best music." - Author unknown*

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## Hope and renewal after loss

Hope is an essential ingredient in the human spirit. Yet when you've lost a loved one, you may feel as if you've lost your hope for the future as well.

It was Martin Luther King Jr. who said "We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope." Grief and loss are a part of life. It's important to acknowledge our grief, to fully experience it and work through it. Yet there comes a time in grieving when we want to find renewed hope for our future. Even in the midst of sadness, we need to feel hopeful.

Although it may seem like you will never feel hopeful again, as the healing process takes place after loss, you'll begin to see opportunities for hope.

Nurture hope. Whatever you're going through in the moment, you can hope that you will grow from the experience. Even if you're not experiencing hope now, you can hope that you will again in the future.

Rely on your faith. If you are a person of faith, realize that your faith is based on strongly-held beliefs, not on what you're feeling at the moment. Read inspirational books or Scriptures. Take part in spiritual activities that are meaningful to you – such as praying, meditating, or going to church. Talk with others in your faith community.

Find reasons to be thankful. At first, it might be for little things, such as a sunny day or a good night's sleep – or that you made it through the day.

When you're ready, set some goals for the future. Are there any hobbies or interests that you set aside due to job or family responsibilities? Consider taking part in these activities again. Community education opportunities may provide a way to brush up on your skills. Or maybe it's time to embark on a new area of interest.

Reach out. Take steps to form new friendships. Volunteer. Are there people in your community who may be experiencing loneliness and isolation? Easing another person's pain may help to ease your own.



Take on a new challenge. Is there something you think you can't do – perhaps something your loved one or spouse always did, and is no longer there to do? Learn how to cook a favorite dish, or address minor household repairs yourself.

Live in the moment: Appreciate what you have right here and right now, whether it's a warm snug home, or a friend visiting with you over coffee. Focus on today, rather than yesterday, or how you'll face tomorrow.

In around 50 BC, Roman author and orator Cicero said "Where there is life, there is hope." Perhaps the reverse could be said as well, "Where there is hope, there is life." Death is a solemn reminder that life is a precious gift, and the days before us are opportunities. Although life will never be the same, find hope in the fact that people do experience healing after loss and go on to experience meaning in new ways.

*"The day the Lord created hope was probably the same day he created Spring." ~Bern Williams*

# Take care of your whole self

Grief affects the whole person – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Taking good care of yourself during this time is more important than ever, yet it's easy to neglect our own needs. Others may want to help, but don't know how or don't know what you need. Take the lead when it comes to your own well-being. Consider these ideas:

## Physical health

- Exercise. It's great for your physical as well as emotional health as it releases endorphins, which lifts your mood. Exercise doesn't have to be complicated. Just walking or stretching is something most anyone can do.
- Get enough rest. Talk to your doctor if you're having trouble sleeping.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet: bread and whole grains, vegetables and fruit, lean meats, milk and dairy products. Drink plenty of fluids – water and juices.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine. They can cause dehydration and headaches. Alcohol steals vitamins, decreases circulation, and can act as a depressant.
- Don't ignore your physical health. Be sure to schedule your annual physical exam and health screenings.

## Mental health

- Don't allow yourself to become overwhelmed. Set a priority on what's important and necessary, and let other things go if need be. Accept help when it's offered to you.
- Plan things to look forward to. Try a new hobby or activity.
- Keep a notebook to write down everyday concerns rather than letting them weigh heavy on your mind.
- You may have trouble remembering everyday details. Place things like keys and paperwork in the same place so you can always find them. Make lists of things to do and celebrate accomplishments.

## Emotional health

- Don't try to detour around the grieving process. Go through it, knowing that it is the path to healing. Affirm that you are OK – hurting, but OK.
- Don't set unrealistic expectations of yourself, or compare your own experience to someone else's.
- Don't isolate yourself. Invite a friend to lunch. Talk with others about your loved one. Consider joining a support group.
- Plan ahead for difficult days. Anniversaries, holidays, and milestones can reawaken memories and feelings.
- Recognize that guilt is a normal part of grieving, but also realize it's not productive. Saying "if only" serves no purpose. The only option is to move forward.
- It's OK to laugh. Grief is serious, but not always solemn. Laughter releases emotional energy.

## Spiritual health

- Find a place of solace, whether it's on your front porch, under a tree, in a park or in your garden.
- The death of a loved one might raise spiritual questions or concerns. Read inspirational books, talk to a member of the clergy, or a friend in your faith community.
- Journal about your feelings and experiences.
- Write a letter to your loved one, or even speak aloud to him or her. Find ways to commemorate and honor your loved ones, such as giving a memorial gift.
- Take time to enjoy your favorite music, the beauty of creation or whatever brings you peace and joy.

During a time of grief, show compassion to yourself as well as those around you who are also grieving. Allow yourself the time and resources it takes to get through this time. As you begin to experience more good days than bad days, you'll realize that you are beginning to heal.

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## Grief presentation

Nationally-known author, psychologist and educator Dr. Alan Wolfelt will present "The Wilderness of Grief" at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 8, at the Sioux Falls Convention Center. Cost for attending this public event is \$20. Dr. Wolfelt has authored 20 books on grief and loss, and is founder and director of The Center for Loss and Life Transitions. His compassionate messages about healing in grief are based on his own personal losses and his experience supporting children, teens, adults and families over the past three decades. The event is sponsored by Catholic Family Services, Miller Funeral Home and the Catholic Foundation of Eastern South Dakota. For more information please call 988-3775.

### ***No Person is Ever Truly Alone***

*by Richard Fife*

**No person is ever truly alone.  
Those who live no more,  
Whom we loved,  
Echo still within our thoughts,  
Our words, our hearts.  
And what they did  
And who they were  
Becomes a part of all that we are,  
Forever.**

*"You don't get over it, you just get through it. You don't get by it, because you can't get around it. It doesn't 'get better,' it just gets different. Everyday grief puts on a new face."*

*- Wendy Feireis*

