

# Good Grief

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## The Mourner's Bill of Rights

by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Though you should reach out to others as you do the work of mourning, you should not feel obligated to accept the unhelpful responses you may receive from some people. You are the one who is grieving, and as such, you have certain "rights" no one should try to take away from you.

The following list is intended both to empower you to heal and to decide how others can and cannot help. This is not to discourage you from reaching out to others for help, but rather to assist you in distinguishing useful responses from hurtful ones.

### 1. You have the right to experience your own unique grief.

No one else will grieve in exactly the same way you do. So, when you turn to others for help, don't allow them to tell what you should or should not be feeling.

### 2. You have the right to talk about your grief.

Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk as much as you want, as often as you want, about your grief. If at times you don't feel like talking, you also have the right to be silent.

### 3. You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions.

Confusion, disorientation, fear, guilt and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief journey. Others may try to tell you that feeling angry, for example, is wrong. Don't take these judgmental responses to heart. Instead, find listeners who will accept your feelings without condition.

### 4. You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.

Your feelings of loss and sadness may leave you feeling fatigued. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. And don't allow others to push you into doing things you don't feel ready to do.

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## BC Bereavement Day November 14

The BC Bereavement Helpline succeeded in having the BC government recognize one day a year as BC Bereavement Day. Last year it was November 14th.



The black ribbon was adopted as the symbol of this day. Often, these ribbons are given out on BC Bereavement Day and worn in honour of those who have died.

On this day, many bereavement organizations around the province sponsored education or memorial events.

To find out how you can participate next year, call the BC Bereavement Helpline at 604-738-9950.



Griefworks BC is a partnership between BC Children's & Women's Health Centre and Canuck Place Children's Hospice as a way to ensure that people in BC had access to comprehensive, timely bereavement support when and where they need it.

In January 2001, Kay Johnson was hired as the Director. You can reach Kay at 604-875-2741 or [kjohnson@cw.bc.ca](mailto:kjohnson@cw.bc.ca).



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**5. You have the right to experience "griefbursts."** Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This can be frightening but is normal & natural. Find someone who lets you talk it out.

**6. You have the right to make use of ritual.**

The funeral ritual does more than acknowledge the death of someone loved. It helps provide you with the support of caring people. More importantly, the funeral is a way for you to mourn. If others tell you the funeral or other healing rituals such as these are silly or unnecessary, don't listen.

**7. You have the right to embrace your spirituality.**

If faith is a part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you feel angry at God, find someone to talk with who won't be critical of your feelings of hurt and abandonment.

**8. You have the right to search for meaning.**

You may find yourself asking, "Why did he or she die? Why this way? Why now?" Some of your questions may have answers, but some may not. And watch out for the clichéd responses some people may give you. Comments like, "It was God's will" or "Think of what you have to be thankful for" are not helpful and you do not have to accept them.

**9. You have the right to treasure your memories.**

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring your memories, find others with whom you can share them.

**10. You have the right to move toward your grief and heal.**

Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself and avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you. Neither you nor those around you must forget that the death of someone loved changes your life forever.

This article is from the 'Free Articles' section of [www.centerforloss.com](http://www.centerforloss.com), Dr. Wolfelt's website. It's an excellent site with good articles, a bookstore & more.

## Question Corner



To have your question answered or to submit ideas for future articles, information, etc., please email [person@griefworksbc.com](mailto:person@griefworksbc.com) or call 604-875-2741. For outside the Lower Mainland in BC, call toll free to 1-877-234-3322.



## In Memorium

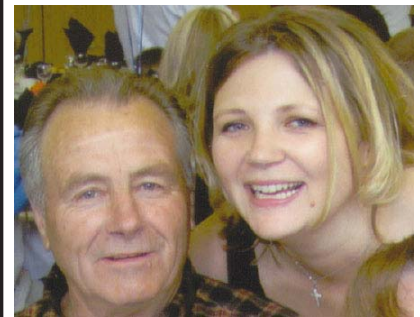
Recent Honour Page Offerings



Gregory Hayes



Emily Rose Wilson Abelsen



Glen Findlay

To add your tribute to the Honour Page, go to [www.griefworksbc.com](http://www.griefworksbc.com) and click on **Honour Page** on the top blue bar.

### Grief Around the World

In the grief after a significant loss, it may be hard to believe that other grievers around us will probably not feel the same things; react in the same way; want the same things; or even care about the same things as we do. Here are some thoughts found on a cereal box and shared by Corrina Padgham, a Children's Hospital nurse in Auckland, Australia.

- ◆ "If you do not know what you want, please try not to tell me that what I want is wrong.
- ◆ If I believe differently from you, at least pause before you correct my view.
- ◆ If my emotion is less than yours, or more, given the same circumstances, try not to ask me to feel more strongly or weakly.
- ◆ If I act, or fail to act, in the manner of your design for action, let me be.

- ◆ I do not, for the moment at least, ask you to understand me. That will come only when you are willing to give up changing me into a copy of you.

- ◆ I may be your spouse, your parent, your offspring, your friend, or your colleague. If you allow me any of my own wants, or beliefs, or actions, then you open yourself, so that someday these wants of mine might not seem so wrong, and might finally appear to you as right - for me. To put up with me is the first step in understanding me. Not that you embrace my ways as right for you, but that you are no longer irritated or disappointed with me for my seeming waywardness. And in understanding me you might come to prize my differences from you, and far from seeking to change me, preserve and even nurture those differences."

No matter where we are, it seems that the key to working through the big issues is to work within a framework of patience, understanding and mutual respect.

### Common Grief Myths

**Grief & mourning are the same**

- ◆ Grief is a cluster of emotions including sadness, anger, fear, frustration, hopelessness, and so forth.
- ◆ Grieving is acknowledging the feelings & experience. It is the process that a person decides to be involved in to make sense of their loss.
- ◆ Mourning is usually cultural; the external behavior, rituals, traditions, etc.
- ◆ In young children, grief is most often seen as behavioral or physical - acting out, fighting, using bad language, breaking things, stomach aches, sore throats
- ◆ Sometimes, it is as simple as giving kids permission to grieve by openly talking with them about the death.

## Contributor's Column

These columns are  
waiting for your articles,  
entries, etc.



## Upcoming Events

