Journal writing is therapy, not drudgery! Be playful. It’s okay to get a little “goofy”; it’s okay to have fun. Write for your eyes only.

What continues to be What I like about me
Things I treasure most Weaknesses
Coping behaviors that Fears
Nurturing experiences Goals, wishes
Make lists of:
- What made me laugh, Confess shortcomings
- What was different  How I feel supported
- Highs and lows Moments of wonder
- Record daily experiences:
  - Moments of wonder
  - Important conversations
  - How I feel supported
  - Brag about triumphs
  - Confess shortcomings
  - Fears

Choose a journal that suits you – big or small, 79 cents or $10.00 variety, lined or unlined, soft or hardbound. Practical Suggestions for Journaling

- Feelings
- Thoughts
- Stories

Prayers
Poems
Even swear words!

“Unless you can tell me what you didn’t like, as well as what you liked, you’re not going through the grieving process.”
Earl Grollman

OUR NEEDS DURING GRIEF

When you experience the death of someone you love, your whole perspective of life can change. Pay attention to the special needs you may have during your grief and mourning process. You may become acutely aware of time. Time becomes precious and you may find that you want to spend it wisely. It helps to make time to be with people you trust who will listen when you need to talk. You also need time to get to know yourself better and to process all that has happened. You may need months and years of time to understand the feelings that go along with loss.

You will need extra amounts of the things that are rejuvenating and nurturing. Since mourning is an exhausting process both emotionally and physically, you will need to replenish yourself. Do the things that feel healing to you and that connect you to the people and things you love.

Pay particular attention to your body and its needs. Get plenty of rest and relaxation. When you grieve, you work overtime and need extra amounts of the things that are rejuvenating and nurturing. Since mourning is an exhausting process both emotionally and physically, you will need to replenish yourself. Do the things that feel healing to you and that connect you to the people and things you love.

The death of a loved one will push you to make necessary changes and decisions. When making these decisions, you need to feel secure. Rely on people you trust – a family member, friend or colleague – to help you through these frightening decisions. If you have a problem and don’t know where to turn (for example, a plumbing problem or a financial issue) turn to the people you trust for referrals to people they trust. Beware of being pushed into things before you are ready or before you understand them fully.

At those desperate moments everyone goes through, have hope and remember that many, many people have recovered from profound losses and have built new, fulfilling lives. Mourning brings healing most readily when it includes the help of others who have gone through grief and mourning and who can share their wisdom and practical advice.

Try to accept expressions of caring from others even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Your family and friends may need your help to know how to help you. They mean well even though they may give advice which comes out all wrong. It takes extra energy to let people know what would feel best, but the effort is worth it. They can’t help you unless they know how.

Join us at one of our annual events

Butterfly Release
To Be Announced
Details to come
Call for information

Light Up A Life
To Be Announced
Details to come
Call for information

All of these events are open to the community. For more information, contact the Hope Bereavement Center at (760) 431-4100.
For a while, it may feel impossible to put any structure into your life again. It may seem that there is no meaning or reason to go on with life. At these times, small goals help. Having something to look forward to, like going to lunch or to a movie, helps you to get through the immediate future. Live one day at a time; it’s a cliché, but it works. Initially, you may find it painful to go out, but in time it will become easier and more enjoyable. As the months pass, you may choose to work on more long-range goals to give added structure and direction to your life.

Don’t understate or deny yourself of the therapeutic value of simple pleasures. Sunsets, a walk on the beach, a long hot bath – these pleasures can help renew your emotional investment in life. Try to banish guilt from your grieving. It can be an enemy by making you feel it is wrong to laugh or feel pleasure and enjoy any part of life again.

Sometimes after you have felt good for some time, you may find yourself stepping back into feelings of sadness, despair or anger. This is the nature of mourning; it goes up and down and it usually repeats itself. Your emotions return because you can’t take in all of the pain and life changes at once. Instead, you let in a little at a time.

Recognize that your grief heals gradually and give yourself permission to backslide. Remember, backsliding is not the same as regression. In some circumstances medication can be prescribed to help people through the most traumatic, incapacitating period of grief, especially if they have been taken for emotional or mental health problems. Most of the time, however, drugs that deaden feelings should be avoided or used in moderation. Although they may temporarily relieve some of the pain, in the long run, even when necessary, they may delay or extend the healing process. Alcohol is a drug that also fits into this category. Remember, we cannot prevent or cure grief. The only way out is through it.

### Journey Keeping

In recent years, journaling has become a popular tool with many kinds of stress and inner conflicts. It is a technique that you can use to sort out and vent your feelings, identify issues that are creating stress, and provide insights for problem solving and the resolution of relationship issues.

Journaling is different from keeping a diary. When you journal, you write about and examine your inner processes—what’s going on inside of you—rather than your external environment. When journaling, you may record feelings, thoughts, anxieties, fears, joys, concerns, and how you deal with them. You may also record what you feel are the outside sources of your feelings (for example, an argument or loss), but you focus on how you process the experience internally.

To help start your journaling process, you may want to ask yourself and answer some questions:

- Did I love or lose-erect a situation?
- Am I allowing my perceptions to be colored by emotion?
- Do I recall past events with the present experience?
- Are my feelings, especially fears, so strong that they overtake my ability to think correctly?
- What experience determines my reactions? Is this a constant pattern? A new pattern? A lost pattern?

### When Journaling, Consider these Tips:

- Complete sentences and attention to grammar are not necessary. Often a phrase or even just a word is adequate to record the experience.
- Date every entry.
- Use the free-flowing method. jot down your thoughts and feelings as they occur without censoring.
- Review your entries periodically to give yourself feedback about your flow of thoughts and feelings. When you review your entries, you can gain insight about how you are progressing.
- When you reread entries (immediately or at a later time) don’t edit them. If you want to add notes or comments to prior entries, use another color ink or pencil so you can see how you have changed over time. Also add the date of your additions.
- Make your entries as regular as possible. Daily entries will enable you to track and process your experience more completely than haphazard or less frequent entries. Weekly entries can help you see large patterns of responses and marked changes. Entries less frequent than weekly may seem that there is no meaning or reason to go on with life. At these times, small goals help. Having something to look forward to, like going to lunch or to a movie, helps you to get through the immediate future. Live one day at a time; it’s a cliché, but it works. Initially, you may find it painful to go out, but in time it will become easier and more enjoyable. As the months pass, you may choose to work on more long-range goals to give added structure and direction to your life.
- Don’t understate or deny yourself of the therapeutic value of simple pleasures. Sunsets, a walk on the beach, a long hot bath—the pleasures can help renew your emotional investment in life. Try to banish guilt from your grieving. It can be an enemy by making you feel it is wrong to laugh or feel pleasure and enjoy any part of life again.

### Parent’s Corner

### Helping Children Grieve Constructively

Most often, children show their grief through their behavior; they act out their grief. Many new problems such as increased withdrawal, clinging, day dreaming, fights, decreased concentration, changes in eating or sleeping patterns, and dropping grades, as well as the recurrence of old problems may be symptoms of grief.

Children need to be assured again and again that they will survive their loss. They can be reassured in three ways: first, let them know what we are, what we say and what we do.

The most important way to reassure children is by how we are. Children learn how to grieve by watching you grieve. You are their role model. It is important for them to see that you can grieve without being destroyed and to see you taking care of yourself in your grief. Getting help when you need it gives your children the permission they need to reach out for support.

When an expert in child raising was asked what three things parents could do that would help them be good parents, the reply was, “Listen, listen, listen.” This is never truer than when children are grieving. A listening attitude is conveyed by being patient, respectful and empathetic. By adopting this attitude, you give your children a safe place where they can share and work through their feelings and create their own understanding. By listening, you validate and normalize their feelings and also can correct any misconceptions they may have about the death.

It is important to be aware of the expectations you have of your own children.

Children may feel compelled to step into some of the roles the deceased played in the home. One common example is the young son who tries to be the man in the house. Reassure your child that he is not expected to fill this role.

Just as your behavior can reassure children, what you say can decrease their isolation. It is important to be honest, direct and open with children and to speak to their age level. You don’t need to tell them more than they can take in and understand at this time.

Because children need to regain their sense of control, it is important to follow their lead when discussing their grief. They are more likely to open up when they feel in control of the timing and content of the conversation. Remember, children deal with their grief in small doses. Don’t be concerned if they talk about issues close to them for a brief time and then either change the subject or go out and play.

There are several reasons to talk with children about the person who died. Talking about the deceased allows that person to stay in their hearts and memories. Talking also lets you clear up any misconceptions about the death that the children may have. For example, one child felt he caused his grandmother’s death by arguing with his mom. This misunderstanding was cleared up easily by talking about what really caused his grandmother’s death.

Children often want to know concrete details about death and dying. When they ask, answer honestly and directly. Call your local hospice or morgue if you would like more information. It is all right to say you do not know the answer.

What can you do to reassure your children? Include them when possible when you discuss things that affect them, such as holiday rituals and memorials.

Visit the cemetery or where the ashes have been scattered if your child wants. Encourage artwork such as drawing or clay to help them express their feelings.

Help them construct a memory book about the person who died, include photos, drawings, funeral and obituary notices, memorabilia, short stories, favorite foods, movies, TV shows, jokes, family events and poetry. Older children may find a journal to be a valuable tool.

Talk to teachers, school counselors, church members, and leaders of any of your child’s clubs so they understand that any changes in their behavior are an expression of grief. It is important to maintain routines with consistent structure and physical nurturance (hugs, food, vitamins, rest and exercise). If you are concerned about any of your child’s behaviors or reactions, you may want to contact your local hospice or a school counselor for referrals to children’s grief programs in your area.

### Write a Letter

A powerful way to journal is to write a letter to the person who died. When you write one of these letters, you can get in touch with your feelings and release some of your pain by “talking” to your loved one. You may want to use the letter to finish or complete something that you may have left undone or unsaid. This exercise may seem a little strange at first, but many people find it to be quite valuable.

Topics that you may want to address include:

- A special memory you have about your loved one;
- What you miss most about your loved one and your relationship;
- What you wish you had or hadn’t said;
- What you would like to ask your loved one;
- What you wish you had or hadn’t done;
- What you’ve had the hardest time dealing with;
- Ways your loved one will continue to live in you;
- Special ways you have for keeping your memories;
- How you’ve grown through this profound experience.

Choose one or several ideas that have significance for you, or start at the top of the list and work your way down. These topics may help you come up with ideas specific to your situation and relationship.

Then write a second letter answering the questions or issues in your first letter, telling yourself what you imagine your loved one would say.

Writing these letters may bring up painful, even frightening, feelings. However, getting these feelings and expressions of belief and healing. When you speak or write about your pain, you take the opportunity to release it.

You may find even more healing by reading your letter to someone you trust who will listen without judging you or giving you advice.

The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places...”

Ernest Hemingway
A Farewell to Arms