

TAKING TIME TO HEAL

Starting in childhood many people have been taught to face life's crises with a "stiff upper lip", to "bear up and be strong." As we are influenced by these messages, we may fear that any show of emotion, particularly tears, may be interpreted by people as a sign of weakness. It is important to realize that experiencing grief is a normal, natural and expected response to the loss of a significant person in your life. The Center for Grief and Loss bereavement counselors assist persons as they experience the loss of a loved one – whether a spouse, sibling, parent, friend, whomever it may be. Here are some general suggestions that may be helpful during this difficult time.

- **Take Time to Live with Death** - Facing and living with the reality of death is a necessary condition for continuing our own life.
- **Take Time to Adjust** - Adjusting to a new reality in which the deceased is no longer present. Adjusting occurs when we are able to accept whatever feelings – anger, guilt, fear, sadness – that accompany death. Adjusting occurs when we are able to tolerate the feelings, to wait, trust and hope again.
- **Take Time to Make Decisions** - It is important that the bereaved be patient with themselves and gradually make decisions as a way to control and sustain self worth. It is wise to postpone major decisions, if at all possible, for a year after the loss.
- **Take Time to Share** - The greatest need of the bereaved is to have someone share their pain, their memories, and their sadness. Sharing with others with similar losses is especially healing.
- **Take Time to Believe** - For many people, spiritual beliefs and religion offer a comforting and strengthening base in the lonely encounter with helplessness and hopelessness.
- **Take Time to Forgive** - We need to accept our imperfections, not torture ourselves for the things we did or did not do.
- **Take Time to Feel Good About Yourself** - Exploring new interest, developing hobbies, and taking advantage of new opportunities are all activities designed to help the bereaved reinvest their energies in new endeavors.
- **Take Time to Meet New Friends** - Healing occurs when we move out of our safe boundaries and interact with others. New friends will be there to offer opportunities. Join a support group, a club, or take a class.
- **Take Time to Laugh** - Laughter helps us survive and re-enter life. It can co-exist with tears! It is not disrespectful to our loved one who died.
- **Take Time to Give** - One of the best ways to overcome loneliness and grief is to be concerned about the pain of others. Finding someone who needs us can be our opportunity for healing. Get involved with others.

The Counseling Center at Stella Maris, Inc.