

Journeys



A Vacation from Grief

*By Jennifer Shontz, LCSW
Grief Support Specialist
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It's summertime! A time for the buzzing of the cicadas, the smell of cut grass, baseball and of course, vacations.

Vacations allow us the opportunity to get away from our day-to-day routines, to rest, retreat and renew our energies. Sometimes we go alone and sometimes with people we trust and care about.

But is it possible to take a vacation in the midst of grief? Will we really be able to leave our grief behind, or will it come with us on our travels, packed snugly in our suitcase like an unwelcome

guest, demanding our attention?

What IS possible is to take a vacation from the hard *work* of grieving; to catch your breath and allow the crashing waves of grief to become ripples, if only for a while.

You can allow yourself

*Travel in the car,
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of your heart.*

a "time-out" in which to appreciate the beauties of nature, listen to soothing music, spend time in prayer or contemplation or engage in a physical activity you

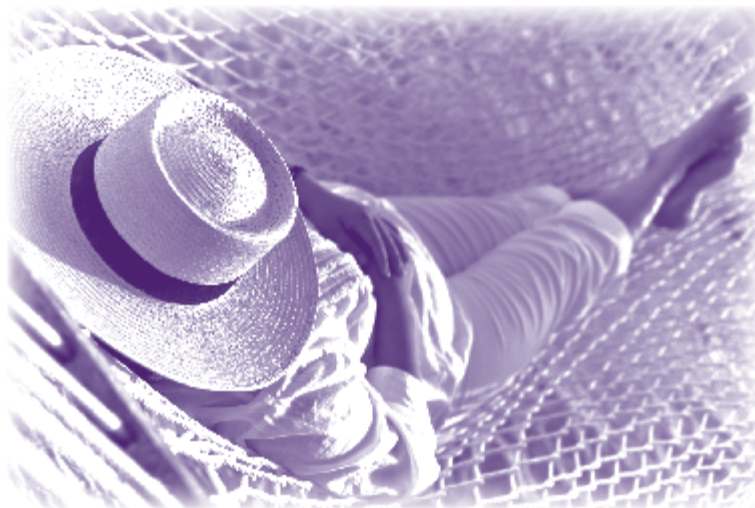
enjoy. Or you can choose to indulge yourself by sleeping late, laughing and not feeling guilty for the laughter, or putting the "to do" list aside and doing something you enjoy just because you enjoy it.

Be creative and choose a vacation that is custom-made just for you. You are the best travel agent because you know best what your limitations, preferences and needs are. But it's also okay to ask for help or for a companion to travel with you. You just have to ask.

This summer, why not take a vacation for a week, a day, a moment? Travel in the car, on the train, in your imagination or in the peacefulness of your heart. You deserve it!

When you come back, your grief may be waiting for you. But when you unpack, just maybe you'll have more room in your suitcase for something new and surprising.

Have a safe, pleasant and restful journey. We'll see you when you get back!



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Summer/Fall
2011

Easing Back into School for Grieving Kids

By Lisa Templeton-Farmer
 Child/Teen Specialist
 Kansas City Hospice
 & Palliative Care



When summer vacation winds down and kids head back to school, grieving families might find that the new year brings new stress. Frequent, good communication with your child and his/her school is key to an easier transition.

The most important thing is to talk with your child's teachers, counselor, social worker and even the principal. Let them know about your family's loss, and check in with them regularly to watch for things such as slipping grades, not eating lunch, not interacting with friends and not playing at recess. The more people involved, the less likely any potential problems will go unnoticed.

A quick e-mail or phone call is all it takes to see how your child is doing.

It's also very important to consider whether there are any big changes, such as going to a different school or going to school for the first time. Even starting middle or high school, which is planned and necessary, is still a change that could complicate the stress of a new school year.

Keep in mind that loss often makes children more clingy, so if you were able to take time off in the summer and spent a lot of time together, your child might cling to you when it's time to return to school. Likewise, stay-at-

home parents might have to make an adjustment and get used to not having the kids around during the day.

Kids also could be shy about discussing their loss with others. Talk to your child about how he/she would like classmates to learn about the loss. The more control children have, the better. They might want a parent or guardian to talk to people at school; they might want their teacher to say something to the other students; or they might want little said about it.

Although school might add stress, the upside is that children can return to their routine, which can be a comfort to children as well as adults. It can be a comfort for kids, especially older children and teens, to be back with their support system of friends.

Camp Carousel also might be a good Fall activity for your family. It's a free weekend retreat, Sept. 23-25, at Heartland Presbyterian Center. Visit kansascityhospice.org for more info.

Asking Friends and Family for Help

Remember all of those people who told you "Call me if you need anything?" This difficult and busy time when you are grieving is the time to follow up on their offers.

You may be hesitant to ask friends and family for help, but your friends and family will feel good about being able to make things easier for you.

"Also, they are grieving too, and helping you will help them work through their grief," says Melissa Waugh, MS, Grief Support Specialist of Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care. She suggests asking friends and family for help with things such as:

Household chores and yard work. A friend or relative could help inside with washing dishes, laundry, vacuuming or other cleaning, or outside by mowing the grass, raking leaves or shoveling snow.

Car maintenance, such as oil changes, car washes or preparing your car for winter. Especially if you aren't used to taking care of the car, having a friend help can ease your stress.

Running errands, such as picking up or dropping off items at the dry cleaner's, pharmacy or bank, or stopping by the post office or grocery store for you.

Transportation. Have someone give you a ride to the store if you don't drive. If you have kids, have a friend or relative take them or pick them up at school, games, lessons, friends' houses or other activities.

Child care, such as babysitting when you can't be at home with them or when you just need a break. Also, encourage friends to support your kids with a card or phone call every few months.

Food. It's easy to eat out a lot during the busy months following a loss. Let friends know they can help by bringing over a meal.

Social support. The first few months after a loss can be busy with settling the estate. Ask friends if they want to schedule a time to get together about three months after your loss, when you'll have more time and be more ready to get out. Walk to the park together, take in a free concert or go for a cup of coffee.

Journaling Through a Loss

By Jan Farr, Volunteer,
Kansas City Hospice House

The healing process of grief involves work, time, and energy. One way to channel your energy into healing is journaling.

Journaling is the process of expressing ourselves, growing, learning, and finding new meaning in our lives.

Journaling is powerful.

The power of writing can take your thoughts and feelings to a deeper understanding. Writing calls upon both our conscious and unconscious and helps us discover ideas, patterns, and connections we wouldn't otherwise.

I began journaling when Jim, my late husband, was first diagnosed with cancer in 2004. My journal became a precious

healing gift to myself and connection to my soul.

Through journaling I discovered more about the "us" living on in my heart. Writing helped me surrender my feelings and enjoy memories. I wrote to clarify issues and to express my gratitude for the privilege of accompanying Jim on his final journey.

How do you start?

Just start. Try writing about how you feel and what you've discovered. Do you feel lost, angry, alone, depressed, grateful, hurt, overwhelmed, challenged or hopeful? Are you frustrated, resentful, tired, hurt or more courageous?

Know that your journal is a safe, forgiving place to express yourself. Reading your own words helps you honor and respect your own feelings.

Develop a writing ritual.

Anyone can journal. You only need pen and paper or computer. Be creative. Feel free to add pictures, quotes, song lyrics, drawings -- whatever expresses you. Carry a notebook with you to remember ideas.

As for rules, there are none, just some suggestions:

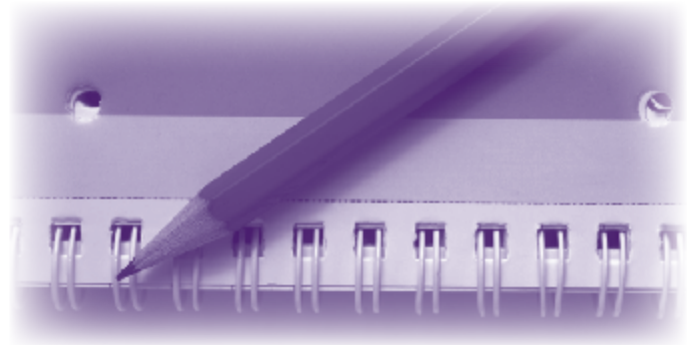
Try to write at the same time every day, but explore ideas as they come. Write for 10-20 minutes a day, or on most days.

Write quickly, without thinking. Don't worry

about editing, spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Just get your ideas on paper. Surrender to the process and let your inner self guide you. Allow ideas to flow freely and follow them wherever they lead you.

Put a date on your pages to help you monitor your progress down the road. Keep your journal private so you won't feel inhibited.

Try journaling and be pleasantly amazed of the healing benefits in your own discovery zone.



Time for Change

By Melissa Waugh, M.S.
Grief Support Specialist
Kansas City Hospice &
Palliative Care

Losing a loved one is a big change. It also forces us to consider other changes in our lives.

Moving, sorting through your loved one's belongings and getting a new job are just some examples of changes that are common for people after the loss of a loved one.

Any change you are experiencing will cause

stress. Thinking about what changes to make and which ones can wait makes the transition easier.

Big changes that are permanent or difficult to reverse should wait at least six months. Waiting a year or more after the loss of a loved one is ideal.

Moving is a big change that can cause you to lose a sense of continuity. A move is stressful enough, and when you add grieving into the mix, it can complicate the situation, especially if it requires sorting through

a deceased loved one's belongings.

Changing jobs can also create stress and a loss of continuity. So, it's best to wait awhile, if possible.

Other changes can be made sooner, such as reorganizing or redecorating your home. It's common for women who've lost a spouse to change their bedrooms. Some prefer to change photos on display depending upon what brings comfort.

Those grieving may

want to get a pet and, while animals bring comfort, pet ownership can be a financial strain.

Before making a change, consider whether it can wait or if it will bring comfort. If it brings deep emotions, consider waiting a few months until it's easier for you.

If you'd like to discuss your thoughts and changes, contact us by calling Grief Support Services at 816.363.2600, or visit kansascityhospice.org for additional resources.



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Editor: *Kenyon Anderson*

Support Group Schedule

Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care offers grief support groups and workshops. Groups are designed for adults who are at least two or three months past their loss at the time the group begins.

It's free to attend groups, but registration is required. Registration may be closed

when a group is full, or groups may be cancelled because of low registration.

If you have any questions, call Grief Support Services at Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care, 816.363.2600.

Workshop for Adult Children who have Lost a Parent

Tuesday, August 30, 6 to 8

p.m., Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care Main Office, 9221 Ward Parkway, Suite 100, Kansas City, Mo. Register by August 26.

Managing Early Grief

Tuesdays, October 11 to November 8, 6 to 7:30 p.m., Kansas City Hospice & Palliative Care Main Office, 9221 Ward Parkway, Suite

100, Kansas City, Mo. Register by October 4.

Hold My Hand: Walking with Children & Teens through their Grief Journey

Monday, July 18, 6 to 8 p.m., Solace House, 8012 State Line Rd., Suite 202, Shawnee Mission, Ks. Space is limited, so register early. Call 913.341.0318 to register.

Additional Resources & Support

SkillBuilders

For practical support, consider SkillBuilders classes, offered by the Heartland Widowed Persons Service. The free classes are designed for newly widowed people, but anyone else may attend.

For more information about these classes and other

support services, call Stephen E. Hamilton, Board President, at 913.648.1520.

Grief Support Network

Additional resources are available through the Grief Support Network at griefsupportnetwork.org.

