



Healing After Loss

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Telephone Numbers

Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento	916-887-0000
Ask for the Nursing Supervisor	
Chaplain	916-887-1222
Hospice	916-388-6255
Social Services	916-887-4104
Sutter Center for Psychiatry	916-386-3000

Reach out to others. Consider support groups and counseling.

GRIEVING IS A SACRED JOURNEY

THERE IS A TIME FOR ALL THINGS,
A TIME FOR FEELING SAD,
A TIME FOR FEELING HAPPY,
A TIME FOR BEING RESTLESS,
A TIME FOR BEING STILL,
A TIME FOR BEING EXHAUSTED,
A TIME FOR BEING ENERGIZED,
A TIME FOR WANDERING,
A TIME FOR BEING AT HOME.

IF YOU CAN LET YOUR GRIEF GO
ITS OWN WAY,
YOU WILL RETURN TO THE CENTER
OF YOUR LIFE.

ADAPTED FROM PAMELA METZ

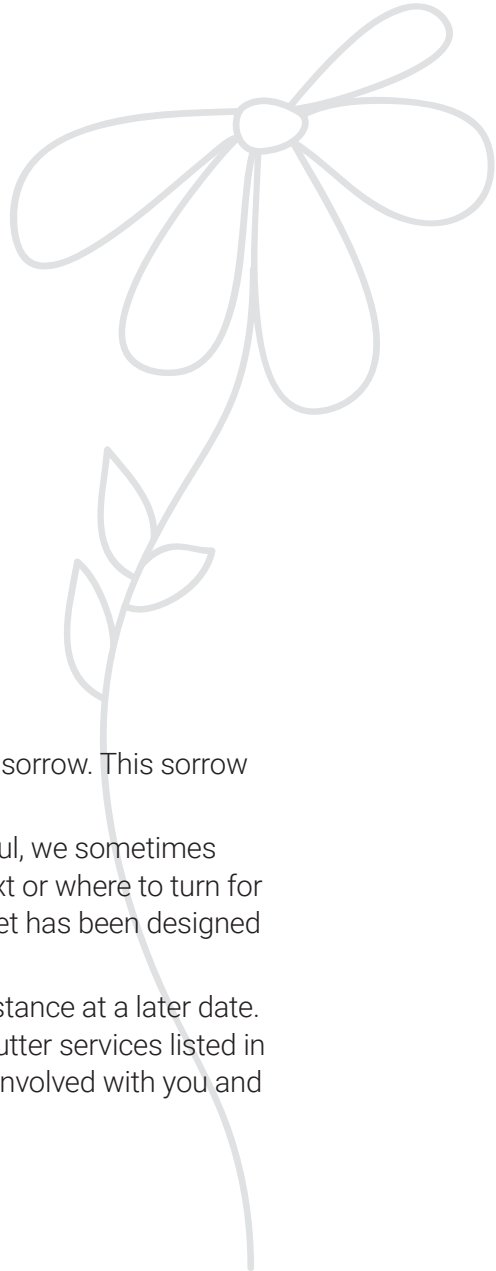
Dear Friend,

The death of a loved one brings profound sorrow. This sorrow affects our bodies, minds and lives.

Because grief can be confusing and painful, we sometimes find ourselves not knowing what to do next or where to turn for assistance. This Healing After Loss booklet has been designed to help you through this difficult time.

There may be a need for you to seek assistance at a later date. We invite and encourage you to use the Sutter services listed in this booklet and contact the staff person involved with you and your family.

Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento



The First Hours and Days After Death: What to Expect

Your grief is unique. No one can tell you exactly how long, or in what manner, you “should” or will grieve. Different cultures, different religions and different personalities all experience grief differently. You will also experience thoughts and emotions in different ways at different times, at one moment intense and at another muted or washed out. The experience of illness and loss can begin a roller coaster ride of ups and downs and twists and turns. You may find yourself at one moment sobbing, and soon after unable to cry at all. You may share in some of the common elements of bereavement listed, but only you can chart your unique journey through grief and healing.

Shock

Your first response to your loss may be one of shock. A kind of numbness may envelope you. Everything may feel dreamlike or unreal. Shock cushions the blow because the loss is too much to absorb at once. You might experience odd physical sensations, a detached feeling, a knot in your stomach, no appetite. Through the first days and later months of grief you may also experience an exhaustion or weariness you have not known before.

Denial

Your shock may be mixed with or followed by denial. You may comprehend intellectually what has happened, but on a deeper level all of your habits and memories are denying death. You may find yourself setting the wrong number of plates at the table or saving bits of news for someone who will never be able to hear them. Though a part of you will always grieve, in time you will adjust to the death.

Anger

Anger is a normal response to loss. You may find yourself angry with the doctors and nurses for not being able to save your loved one, or you may be angry with yourself or feel angry in general. You may even feel angry with the one who died. It may feel like they have abandoned you.

Guilt

Few survivors escape without some feelings of guilt. You may feel guilty because you did not make sure your loved one took care of his health or went to the doctor sooner. A long illness may have led to feelings of resentment and guilt over the resentment. A sudden or accidental death may give rise to all kinds of “if only” thoughts. Whatever your situation, realize that guilt and regret are normal.

Silence

Some survivors have felt their coworkers, friends and even family may avoid them or avoid the subject of loss. Often the motive is to protect you from the pain of remembering, but this may increase the pain of loneliness and isolation. Talking about your feelings, speaking aloud stories and memories, naming your losses and sharing your good and bad days is an important part of the healing process. Find a friend, religious leader, professional or support group who will listen, not judge and allow you to talk about your loss. Some people may be embarrassed or uncomfortable by the presence of your grief. If and when you can, talk and act naturally, without avoiding the subject of your loss. Grief is a difficult road to journey alone.

Be gentle with yourself — allow others to help.

Planning for a Memorial Service

Different cultures and religions engage in a variety of services and rituals to remember and honor loved ones who have died. Families who organize a service or gathering may find it provides a connection to the support of their friends and community. Personal memorial services provide a chance to talk and begin telling the stories about our loved one. Viewing the body may also help bring reality and closure.

You may find it meaningful to design a personal memorial service. You, other family members or friends may want to share reflections on the life of your loved one. You may want to select a favorite song, scripture reading or poem.

A memorial service gives us permission to grieve as we acknowledge our personal loss and begin the healing process.

Here are some details to consider:

- Choose a mortuary with consideration of burial or cremation.
- Decide on a time and place of funeral or memorial service(s), if one is desired.
- Make a list of immediate family, close friends and co-workers. Contact, or designate someone to contact each by phone.
- Prepare a list of distant persons to be notified by letter or printed notice, and decide which to send to each.
- Write an obituary. Include age, place of birth, cause of death, occupation, college degrees, membership held, military service, outstanding work and a list of survivors in immediate family. Give time and place of the services.
- If flowers are to be omitted, decide on an appropriate memorial to which gifts may be made and include it in the obituary listing.

At times of death, friends and family appreciate the opportunity to offer support and will ask if there is anything they can do. They can:

- Take turns answering the door or phone, keeping careful record of the calls.
- Organize or volunteer for appropriate childcare.
- Coordinate the supply of food for the next few days.
- Prepare a list of people to be thanked for flowers, food, calls, etc.
- Consider special needs of the household, such as cleaning, which might be done by friends.
- Arrange for someone to be at home or watching your home during the service to assure home security.
- Plan where to take flowers after the service (hospital or retirement community).
- If the deceased was living alone, arrange for pet care if required, notify utilities and landlord and tell post office where to send mail.

Funeral, Cremation and Memorial Services

Acacia Cremation and Burial Society

1510 Merkley Ave.,
Suite 5
West Sacramento, CA 95691
916-993-8432

Affordable Cremation and Burial Center

8366 Rovana Cir.
Sacramento, CA 95828
916-455-5486
affordablecremationofsacramento.com

All Faith Cremation

105 Arden Way
Sacramento, CA 95815
916-922-0992
allfaithcremation.com

All Seasons Burial and Cremation

1321 Howe Ave., Ste. 201
Sacramento, CA 95825
916-564-0400
allseasonsburial.com

Andrews and Greulich Mortuary

3939 Fruitridge Rd.
Sacramento, CA 95820
916-732-2026
eastlawn.com

Angel Care Cremation and Burial

8854 Greenback Lane,
Suite 1
Orangevale, CA 95662
916-988-2740
accremation.com

East Lawn Mortuary and Memorial Park

(Mortuary and Cemetery)
9189 E. Stockton Blvd.
Elk Grove, CA 95624
916-732-2031
eastlawn.com

Elk Grove Funeral Chapel

9101 Elk Grove Blvd.
Elk Grove, CA 95624
916-686-1888
elkgrovetfuneralchapel.com

Evergreen Memorial

3030 Fruitridge Rd.
Sacramento, CA 95820
916-424-3503
evergreenmemorialsacramento.com

George L. Klumpp Chapel of Flowers

2691 Riverside Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95818
916-443-7917
klumppsfuneralhome.com

Greater Sacramento Area Muslim Cemetery

(Muslim funerals)
6330 Eagles Nest Rd.
off Jackson Road
Sacramento, CA 95830

Harry A. Nauman and Son

4041 Freeport Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95822
916-452-6157
harryanauman.com

Lind Brothers Mortuary

4221 Manzanita Ave.
Carmichael, CA 95608
916-482-8080
lindbrotherssacramento.com

Lombard and Company

1550 Fulton Ave.
Sacramento, CA 95825
916-483-3297
lombardcofuneraldirectors.com

Miller Funeral Home

507 Scott St.
Folsom, CA 95630
916-985-2295
millerfuneralhomefolsom.net

Morgan-Jones Funeral Home

4200 Broadway
Sacramento, CA 95817
916-452-4444
morganjonesfuneralhome.com

Mount Vernon Memorial Park and Mortuary

(Mortuary and Cemetery)
8201 Greenback Lane
Fair Oaks, CA 95628
916-969-1251
mountvernonmemorial.com

Neptune Society of Northern California

5213 Garfield Ave.
Sacramento, CA 95841
800-229-0709 or
916-338-1111
neptune-society.com

Nicoletti, Culjis and Herberger, Inc.

5401 Folsom Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95819
916-451-7284
nicoletticuljisherbergerfunerals.com

Nightingale-Gilmore Funeral Chapel

1030 Del Paso Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95815
2329 Lexington Street
Sacramento, CA 95815
916-925-3549

Nautilus Society Cremation

2000 Marconi Ave.
Sacramento, CA 95821
916-564-1234
nautiluscremation.com

North Sacramento Funeral Home

725 El Camino Ave.
Sacramento, CA 95815
916-922-9668
northsacfuneral.com

Price Funeral Chapel

6335 Sunrise Blvd.
Citrus Heights, CA 95610
916-725-2109
pricefuneralchapel.com

Reichert's Funeral and Cremation Services

7320 Auburn Blvd.
Citrus Heights, CA 95610
916-729-2229
reichertsfuneral.com

River Cities Funeral Chapel

910 Soule St.
West Sacramento, CA 95691
916-371-4535
rivercitiesfuneralchapel.com

Russ Monroe's Funeral Home

(Cremation and Direct Burial Service)
10940 Fair Oaks Blvd.,
Suite 600
Fair Oaks, CA 95628
916-961-1265
russmonroes.com

Sacramento Memorial Lawn

(Buddhist Services)
6100 Stockton Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95824
916-421-1171

Sierra Hills Memorial Park and East Lawn Mortuary

(Mortuary and Cemetery)
5757 Greenback Lane
Sacramento, CA 95841
916-732-2020
eastlawn.com

*Hold on to hope. Some days you may just seem to exist,
but better days will be back.*

Sierra View Funeral Chapel

6201 Fair Oaks Blvd.
Carmichael, CA 95608
916-481-1515
sierraviewfuneralchapel.net

Simple Traditions, Inc.

6829 Fair Oaks Blvd.,
Suite 300
Carmichael, CA 95608
916-488-2894
bridgescremationsacramento.com

Sunset Lawn Chapel of the Chimes

(Mortuary and Cemetery)
4701 Marysville Blvd.
Sacramento, CA 95838
916-256-2659
sunsetlawnchapelofthechimes.com

Thompson Funeral Home

3601 Fifth Ave.
Sacramento, CA 95817
916-455-3038
thompsonrosechapel.com

Trident Society

9650 Fairway Dr.,
Suite 120
Roseville, CA 95678
916-771-5300
tridentsociety.com

W.F. Gormley and Sons

2015 Capitol Ave.
Sacramento, CA 95811
916-443-6513
gormleyandsons.com

Outlying Area Mortuaries

Chapel of The Hills

1331 Lincoln Way
Auburn, CA 95603
530-885-3773
chapelofthehills-auburn.com

Chapel of The Pines

2855 Cold Springs Rd.
Placerville, CA 95667
530-622-3813
chapelofthepinesfunerals.com

Jones Mortuary

115 S Main St.
Lakeport, CA 95453
707-263-5389
jonesmortuary.com

Kraft Brothers

175 2nd St.
Woodland, CA 95695
530-662-4658

Lambert Funeral Home

400 Douglas Blvd.
Roseville, CA 95678
916-783-0474
lambertfuneral.com

Lassila Funeral Chapels

551 Grass Valley Highway
Auburn, CA 95603
530-885-6271
lassilafuneralchapels.com

Lodi Funeral Home

725 S. Fairmont Ave.
Lodi, CA 95240-4614
209-369-3564
lodifuneralhome.com

McNary's Chapel

458 College St.
Woodland, CA 95695
530-662-5411

Oroville Funeral Home

1454 Montgomery St.
Oroville, CA 95965
530-533-0323
530-533-0822 fax
ramseyfuneralhomes.com

Paradise Chapel of the Pines Mortuary-Crematory

5691 Almond St.
Paradise, CA 95696
530-877-4991
paradisechapelofthepines.com

Smith Funeral Home

116 D St.
Davis, CA 95616-4626
530-795-5600
smith-funerals.com

Yuba City/ Marysville

Hutchinson & Carnes Colonial Chapel

830 D St.
Marysville, CA 95901
530-749-9277
530-749-9377 Fax
lakesidecolonialchapel.com

Lipp & Sullivan Funeral Directors

629 D St.
Marysville, CA 95901
530-742-2473
lippandsullivan.com

Ullrey Memorial Chapel

817 Almond Street
Yuba City, CA 95991
530-673-9542
ullreymemorialchapel.com

County Assisted Cremation and Burial Services

El Dorado County

530-642-7300

Placer County

Placer County Department of Eligibility
(530-889-7633 Auburn area) or (916-784-6009 Roseville area)

Sacramento County

916-874-9320

Yolo County

530-666-8100, Ext. 9383

Suggestions for Helping Yourself Through Grief

Time in and of itself will not heal grief. Healing is a process that takes energy. Treat yourself with the same gentle care you would offer to a good friend in the same situation. Give yourself plenty of time and reassurance. Your grief is unique to you so not all suggestions will be helpful. Choose the ideas that appeal to you.

- Go gently. Don't take on new responsibilities right away. Don't overextend yourself. Keep decision making to a minimum.
- Accept the grief. Roll with the tides of it and let the healing process run its full course. Do not try to be "strong" all the time. Take time to cry. Tears can release the pain and sorrow.
- It is common to feel angry. You may be angry with yourself, the person who died or feel angry in general. Talk about your anger with someone you trust.
- Thinking you are going crazy is a normal reaction. Many grieving people experience lack of concentration, forgetfulness and loss of control of their emotions.
- Depression and despair are common to those in grief. Be careful not to totally withdraw yourself from others. If your depression becomes severe or you are considering suicide, get professional help immediately.
- Hold on to **hope**. Some days you may just seem to exist, but better days will be back.
- Ask for help. Family and friends can't read your mind. It is very important to find someone who cares, understands and with whom you may talk freely. It's OK to need comforting.
- Accept help and support when offered.
- Read books on grief. If grief is understood, it can be a little easier to handle.
- Keep a journal to help you understand what you are feeling and thinking.
- Try to get adequate rest. Go to bed earlier. Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea and soda if you are having trouble sleeping.
- Moderate exercise helps (walking, tennis, swimming, etc.) It offers an opportunity to work off frustration and may help you sleep.
- You may have physical problems brought on by your grief reaction. See your doctor.
- If weekends, holidays, etc., are especially difficult times, schedule activities that you find comforting into these time periods.
- As time passes, plan new interests and learn something new or rediscover old interests, activities and friends.
- Join a grief support group as they offer understanding, friendship and hope.
- Seek the help of a counselor, religious leader or a doctor if grief is unresolved.

Roll with the tides of it, and let the healing process run its full course. Do not try to be "strong" all the time. Take time to cry.

Suggestions for Helping Yourself Through Holidays and Other Special Days

There are many holidays and special days in our lives: birthdays, graduations, weddings, anniversaries and religious observances. These times, already stressful, may intensify feelings of pain and loneliness. Here are some things that other bereaved persons have found helpful. Choose the ones that will help you.

- Holidays and anniversaries often magnify feelings of loss. It is important and natural to experience the sadness that comes. Running away from feelings requires enormous energy and does not help you heal. On anniversaries and holidays, commemorate your loss. Create a photo album from pictures you've been meaning to sort, visit your loved one's grave, light a candle, plan a special service or spend time with your family.
- As the holiday or anniversary approaches share your concerns, feelings and apprehensions with a friend or relative. Tell them that this is a difficult time for you. Accept their help. Acknowledge your loss and don't expect too much of yourself or of the holiday.
- It is okay to be alone. Isolating yourself from others is not recommended, but there are times when solitude is deeply gratifying. Explore being alone and learn what is most healing for you. You don't need to wear yourself out by attending many social functions. Be selective. Saying "no thanks" is OK.
- Create new traditions. You may want to spend special days in new surroundings — take a trip, visit friends or volunteer in a new setting. Don't feel obligated to follow tradition, unless doing so comforts you.
- Be aware that you may experience the deepest grief a day or two after the holiday. As friends and family go home and decorations are taken down you may see and feel a sense of emptiness.
- Send holiday cards early. Receiving cards addressed to or mentioning the name of the one who died can be very distressing. Consider sending cards out very early informing others of the death or enclose cards used at the funeral service. Writing cards can be therapeutic.

How To Help a Grieving Child

Children grieve as part of a family. It is important to include them in family discussions, decisions and activities concerning the death of someone who was a part of their life. Children may learn how to grieve from the adults around them. The following are suggestions for how you may help a child that is grieving.

Be Honest

- It is important that children be told the truth, even if the truth is difficult.
- Provide information a child can understand.
- Suicide and murder are especially difficult to explain to children. It may be helpful to consult a professional or read information on this topic.

Share Your Feelings and Encourage Children to Share Theirs

- Talk about your feelings and allow children to talk about theirs as well. Recognize that children may not grieve the same way you or other adults do, and try not to judge their feelings.
- Let children know that it is always OK for them to talk about their feelings. They won't make others sad when they do this, they are already sad.
- You can cry, be angry or express other feelings in front of children. This helps them to know that it is OK to have these feelings themselves.

Include Children in Funerals, Ceremonies and Services

- Encourage children to be involved in the funeral and memorial service. Provide opportunities for children to make choices about the service, such as picking out a song, helping to choose what the person wears and putting something in the casket as a way of saying goodbye.
- Prepare children for what to expect before, during and after the funeral or services. This includes what they will see, hear, feel, smell, etc. Plan for someone to provide them with support.
- Recognize it may be difficult for children to sit still and be quiet at this time. Make arrangements for a space where it is OK for children to run, play and be loud.

Keep Memories Alive

- Share memories of the person who has died.
- Leave photographs out where they can be seen.
- Help each child choose something that belonged to the person who has died, to keep as theirs.
- Talk about the person who has died.
- Acknowledge feelings and special events when they occur.

Create Healing Rituals

- Sing religious songs, favorites of the person who died or songs with special meaning.
- Remember and recognize significant dates and events (the anniversary of the death, the person's birthday, etc.)
- Light a candle in memory.
- Plant a tree in honor of the person who died.
- Write letters to the person, expressing feelings or saying goodbye.
- Create a memory book or memory box with photos, written memories and mementos of the person who has died. Children can decorate the book or box, and choose items to put in it.

Take Care of Yourself

- Recognize that you have needs, too, and you cannot care for a child if you do not care for yourself.
- Ask for help when you need it. Allow a friend to prepare a meal, clean or babysit.
- Recognize that you will not have the energy for everything. Prioritize. Don't expect too much from yourself.

Activity Ideas

- Read books about death and grief. See the book list in this packet.
- Offer children physical activities, such as play dough, finger paint, a punching bag, etc. Children often have a lot of feelings to express and need appropriate, physical ways to express them.
- Create a memory box (see above), and spend time recalling memories, telling stories and looking at photos.

Keep In Contact With School

- Let teachers and school administrators know about the death. Tell them what information you would like them to tell others at the school.
- Encourage the teacher to tell the class why your child is not at school. Let your child know what their classmates have been told.
- When your child is ready to return to school, talk to the teacher about what to expect. It may be difficult for your child to concentrate at first. Set up a plan with your child and the teacher for what your child can do if he or she is having a hard time and can't participate in school.
- Let your child know where you will be during the school day.

Let children know that it is always OK for them to talk about their feelings.

Helping Children Ages Birth to 9 Understand and Cope With Death

Here are examples of how children of different ages may experience and understand death, as well as suggestions on how to help. Keep in mind that every child is different. Their reactions and thoughts may cross over between various age groups. Remember that grief is a journey and that as they get older, children may want to continue to talk about the death as their understanding grows.

Children Ages Birth-2

How a child understands death:

While infants and toddlers do not understand death, they sense sadness and anxiety around them. They react to separation from primary caregivers and to the emotions of others.

Possible changes in behavior:

May show increased crying and distress and decreased appetite. May also experience changes in behavior, such as regression (returning to earlier behavior) and crankiness.

How to help:

Spend time each day interacting with and holding your child. Keep your child's daily routine as normal as possible.

Children Ages 2-4

How a child understands death:

Children view death as reversible and temporary, believing people who die will come back. They may confuse death with sleeping or being away and have a hard time understanding concepts such as an afterlife and heaven. Magical or egocentric thinking may lead children to believe that they somehow caused the death by a previous wish, thought or action. They may believe that they will catch the same thing as the person who died.

Possible changes in behavior:

Children may return to earlier behaviors, such as thumb-sucking, baby talk, fear of the dark. While some children show little sadness or concern, others may need to talk about events repeatedly. Children may have difficulty separating from parents and other caregivers.

How to help:

Provide simple, honest and concrete explanations about the person's death (i.e. David died because his body stopped working, he won't be here to sleep in his bed, play with you, etc.). Reassure your child that nothing she did, said or thought caused the death. Use the words dead and death, rather than passed away, laid to rest, sleeping, taken from us and lost. Explain changes in your own behavior to your child (i.e., I'm sad that Katie died, etc.). Provide opportunities to play, draw and express feelings.

Prepare children for what to expect relating to rituals, funerals, visitors, etc.

Children Ages 5-9

How a child understands death:

Child will begin to understand that death is permanent. Child may show interest and curiosity in details of death and funeral. They may ask endless questions in order to understand. They do best with simple, honest and accurate information.

Possible changes in behavior:

Physical reactions may include pain, anxiety, stomach aches, etc. Children may experience a variety of emotions, such as extreme sadness, guilt, anger, frustration and denial. At times, they may appear unaffected by the death. Behavior changes may include separation anxiety, changes in grades, aggression and withdrawal.

How to help:

Provide simple and honest explanations. Accept your child's individual style of grieving and provide permission to express feelings. Include the child in planning and participation in goodbye rituals. Identify a support person for the child at these times. Provide opportunities to play, draw, journal and share memories of the person who has died.

Helping Children Ages 10 and Up Understand and Cope With Death

Children Ages 10-12

How a child understands death:

Children are more aware that death is final and understand that they will eventually die. They may be interested in details of the death and goodbye rituals. They may be concerned about how the loss will impact them and may have questions about an afterlife.

Possible changes in behavior:

May be unwilling or reluctant to share feelings, but may react strongly to grief. Preteens may direct anger at others, such as parents, siblings and peers. They may experience a wide range of emotions, such as sadness, guilt, anger, denial, depression and withdrawal. Behavior changes may include isolation, poor grades, complaining of physical symptoms or aggression.

How to help:

Be honest. Use concrete terms to describe death. Encourage discussion and opportunities for expression. Be available and respectful of your child's need for privacy. Model healthy ways to cope with grief, such as continuing with daily routines, sharing openly about feelings and sharing memories of the person who's died. Encourage planning and participation in goodbye rituals.

Teen Ages 13 and up

How a child understands death:

While teens have a more complete understanding of death, and may see life as fragile, they may also see themselves as invincible (i.e., it will not happen to me). They may recognize the impact death has on the family and may question the meaning of life and spiritual/religious beliefs.

Possible changes in behavior:

Teens may express anger at adults. While they may show understanding of death, and even be very interested in it, they may also express denial through risk taking behaviors (e.g., driving fast, using drugs or alcohol). May have difficulty expressing feelings around death, and may choose to grieve with peers rather than adults.

How to help:

Don't assume teens can handle their problems without help or support. Be available and respectful of their need for privacy. Help them identify friends or trusted adults to share their thoughts and feelings with. Provide honest explanations and answers to questions. Model healthy ways to cope with grief, such as continuing with daily routines, sharing openly about feelings and sharing memories of the person who has died. Encourage planning and participation in goodbye rituals.

*Encourage discussion and opportunities for expression.
Provide honest explanations and answers to questions.*

Checklist: What to Do and When

The following list can provide some general guidelines for you to consider following the death of a loved one, particularly the death of a spouse. Your particular circumstances may not involve all of these actions or may require a quicker or slower timeline than this checklist suggests.

Immediately Following Death

- Alert immediate family and close friends.
- Contact the funeral home to take your loved one into their care.
- Arrange for the care of any dependents, including pets.
- Contact your loved one's employer.
- Remove any valuables from your loved one's home and secure the residence.

First Week

- Notify religious, fraternal and civic organizations.
- Arrange for the disposal of any perishables left in your loved one's home and take steps to make the home appear to be occupied (e.g., use of lamp timers, cancel newspaper delivery).
- Alert the post office to forward your loved one's mail.
- Contact rental or lease companies.
- Contact life insurance companies for claim forms.

- Begin locating important documents:
 - Copy of funeral prearrangements.
 - Will.
 - Birth certificate.
 - Social security card.
 - Marriage license.
 - Military discharge papers (DD-214).
 - Real estate deeds and titles.
 - Stock certificates.
 - Insurance policies.
 - Home, occupation, highest level of education (for death certificate).
 - Loan paperwork.
 - Bank and retirement account statements.
 - Last four years of tax returns.
 - Children's birth and marriage certificates if beneficiaries.
 - 12 copies of death certificate (see below).
 - Citizenship papers if not a U.S. citizen.

Talking about your feelings, speaking aloud stories and memories, naming your losses and sharing your good and bad days is an important part of the healing process.

First Month

- Dispose of medications properly.
- Schedule return of medical equipment.
- Notify healthcare providers.
- Cancel prescription and subscriptions.
- Send thank you notes and acknowledgments.
- Notify voter registration.
- Manage social media accounts through memorializing or closing.
- Cancel, or transfer into your name, home services, such as utilities, phone and internet.
- Obtain copies of deceased's outstanding bills and make a plan for paying debts.
- Check online automatic payment services.
- Consult with an attorney to:
 - Review your loved one's will, probate of the estate and other directives.
 - Petition the court for appointment as executor.
 - Transfer assets into your name or into trust accounts.
 - File form 56, Notice Concerning Fiduciary Relationship.
 - Collect monies due the estate.
- Consult with a financial advisor/accountant to:
 - Request benefits.
 - Provide a tax projection and discuss estate taxes.
 - Create an inventory of assets.
- File claims with health insurance, Medicare benefits, life insurance and other insurance companies.
- Change ownership of assets and lines of credit.
- Replace joint bank account(s) to an account in your name.
- Advise all financial institutions, including credit card companies, in writing that a death has occurred.
- Notify all three credit reporting agencies and obtain a current copy of the deceased's credit report.

- Begin applying for survivor benefits.
- Contact the deceased's employer to inquire about any 403(k), pension or company benefits.
- If your loved one was a veteran, inquire about benefits that you may be entitled to through Veteran Affairs.
- Contact the Social Security Administration and other government offices that may have been making payments to your loved one. If your loved one was your spouse, inquire about your eligibility for new benefits.
- Check for any life insurance benefits available through existing credit card or loan accounts.

After the First Month

- Update your will and beneficiaries on your insurance policies, retirement accounts, savings bonds, etc.
- Change registration on vehicles by contacting the Department of Motor Vehicles and cancel the deceased's license.
- Make a list of income and expenses, and create a new budget.
- Begin gathering information for tax returns.

Social Media After Loss

Social media and other forms of technology can impact our experience of grief and loss. Finding support as we are grieving looks different today than it did a generation ago. Social media has changed the ways we communicate, including how we provide and receive information about those who have died. There are many ways that social media may become a part of your grieving process.

Social Media and Its Role With Grief

The death of a loved one is likely to change the ways you interact with social media. One of the first questions may be whether to tell others of your loved ones death via social media. This is your decision to make.

Here are some things to consider as you make this choice:

- Have all of the “necessary” people been informed of the death?
- Are there people who might be harmed by hearing of the death via social media instead of in person or by phone?
- Is it okay to delay a social media announcement until further notifications have been made?
- Will posting allow for shared grief and service planning?

As you feel grief, you may look to social media for support. You may seek distraction, comradery or humor to assist in coping. It is important to consider how social media may meet your needs or impact your emotions. Some may find posting about the death of their loved one to be a way to gain sources of support. Some may find that their grief is better managed with in-person support.

Consider reflecting on how seeing content about the deceased may affect you. It is not uncommon for people to use social media during work, school or during other times that require your focus. Choosing when and how you get on social media can assist in coping. Consider these options:

- Logging out of your social media accounts during certain times of the day, such as during work, school or sleeping hours.
- Temporarily deleting social media apps from your mobile devices.
- Changing your account settings to “hide” certain people/accounts that may include content that is upsetting, such as remembrance posts or the profile of the deceased.
- Setting a time of the day when you are able to safely feel your grief to get on social media.

Social Media Accounts of the Deceased

With the death of a loved one, you may wonder what to do with their digital profiles. There are a number of options available, including:

- Leaving as is – The account will remain active for others to interact with.
- Deleting – The account will be removed.
- Memorializing – The account remains active, but stops any logins into the profile.

Put balance in your life — pray, rest, work, read and relax.

Death Certificate

The death certificate originates at the funeral home. It is completed by the doctor or coroner and taken to the County Health Department for recording and certification. In most counties it remains at the health department for a one-year period. After which, it is moved to the County Recorders Office for permanent filing.

Fraudulent use of Social Security numbers of deceased people has increased. Many institutions and benefit programs now require a certified copy of the death certificate for business transactions where they previously would accept a photocopy. The funeral home can obtain any copies needed for a fee. You should know that the county will charge you for all copies except the one required for veteran's benefits. Below are listed some possible needs:

- Bank accounts
- Credit union accounts
- Franchise Tax Board
- Insurance companies and mortgage insurance
- Lawyer
- Executor of estate
- Pension plan or retirement system
- Real property – One copy each
- Social Security
- Stocks and bonds – One copy each
- Veteran's benefits
- Other _____
- Other _____

For death certificates within one year of death, contact:

Sacramento County Clerk Recorder
600 8th St., Sacramento, CA 95814
916-874-6334 | ccr.saccounty.net

Social Security

Generally a Social Security death benefit is paid only to a surviving spouse unless there are special circumstances. It cannot be overstressed that benefits are not paid automatically. If you believe that you qualify for benefits, contact your nearest Social Security field office at once. Depending on the type of benefits for which you may apply, some of the following records may be required:

- Proof of death (A certified copy of the death certificate).
- Social Security card for deceased.
- Copy of marriage certificate.
- Birth certificate of applicant.
- Birth certificate of deceased.
- Birth certificate of minor children.
- Disability proof for children over 18.
- Receipted funeral bill if applicant is other than surviving spouse.
- Employment record of deceased for the most recent nine-month period.
- Proof of support if applicant is parent or spouse.

The funeral home will notify Social Security of the death by filing a Form 2872. The family, however, must follow up to determine if any additional benefits are due. You can apply for benefits by calling or visiting any Social Security Administration office or by making an appointment through the SSA toll-free number, 800-772-1213. You can also apply through ssa.gov. Public records like your birth certificate and marriage or divorce records must be the originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. Social Security will not accept uncertified photocopies. These certified documents will be returned to you.

Apply for benefits as soon as possible after the death. In some cases, benefits are not retroactive but begin with the application rather than the date of death.

Social Security Administration | ssa.gov

Public Information (all offices) 800-772-1213

TTY only 800-325-0778

Office Locations

Roseville – 910 Cirby Way, 866-348-7830

Sacramento – 2424 Arden Way, Suite 200
855-782-9156

Service available in Russian, Armenian, Spanish,
Chinese, Vietnamese, Lao

Sacramento – 2444 Marconi Avenue
916-979-2019

Service available in Spanish, Lao

South Sacramento – 40 Massie Circle
866-708-3208

Service available in Spanish, Japanese, Chinese,
Vietnamese, Tagalog, Chamorro, French, Lao,
Hmong

West Sacramento – 825 Riverside Pkwy., Suite 1000
866-726-8188

Service available in Spanish, Russian

Veterans Benefits

Category I veteran's benefits apply only to disabled veterans for a disability attributed to their military service. The dependents of these disabled veterans (widows and children under 23 years of age), should visit their nearest Veterans Administration office immediately upon a veteran's death to complete a claim form. Category II veteran's benefits apply to all veterans. A certified copy of the death certificate is required when applying for any veteran's benefits.

Category I

Disabled Veterans

Department of Veteran Affairs
Regional Office
1301 Clay Street, Oakland, CA 94612-5209
North Tower, 12th floor
800-827-1000 | va.gov

Category II

Veterans (non-disabled)

Sacramento County Veterans Service Office
2007 19th Street, Sacramento, CA 95818
916-874-6811

All veterans are entitled to the following things:

- Burial in a national cemetery.
- Headstone or marker.
- U.S. Flag.

Death certificate and proof of honorable discharge required.

If you have any questions related to either category of veteran's benefits, please contact the regional office at 800-827-1000.

Apply for benefits as soon as possible after the death.

Bereavement Support Groups

A variety of grief support groups are provided to the community through hospices, hospitals, churches and community centers. Please call the following organizations for further information.

Sacramento County

Bereavement Outreach Meeting

916-557-5882

VNA and Hospice

916-388-6255

griefhelpsacramento.com

Placer County

Sutter VNA and Hospice

530-886-6650

Hospice Bereavement Support, Roseville

916-797-7850

Other

Yolo Hospice

530-758-5566

Snowline Hospice, Placerville

530-621-7820

Children's Bereavement Art Group

A biweekly support group for children 4-16 years old, grieving the death of a significant person in the last year. Art and creative activities are used to facilitate self-expression.

Children's Art Bereavement Groups are available at the following sites:

Sutter Care at Home, Sacramento

916-454-6555

Sutter Care at Home, Roseville

916-787-7174

Books for Adults

How to Survive the Loss of A Loved One

by Melba Colgrove

Recommended by the American Psychological Association. 94 things to do when there is nothing to be done.

Mortal Matters: When A Loved One Dies

by Sara Engram

Provides answers for those seemingly minor matters that are left to nag the living – the disposition of a body, planning a funeral or memorial service, expressing sympathy and equally important, how to accept it.

Living When A Loved One has Died

by Earl A. Grollman

To help you understand and work through your grief and pick up the pieces of your unique and valuable life.

Grief Recovery Handbook: The Action Handbook for Moving Beyond Death, Divorce, and Other Losses

by John W. James

The Courage to Grieve: Creative Living, Recovery and Growth Through Grief

Judy Tatelbaum

Books About Children's Grief

Helping Teens Cope with Death

by Dougy Center

Explains common grief reactions of teenagers, specific challenges grieving teens face, when to seek professional help and advice from other parents.

35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child

by Dougy Center

A practical guide for parents and caregivers.

Guiding Your Child Through Grief

by James P. Emswiler PMA, MFD; Mary Ann Emswiler M.A., MPS

A guide to help children and adolescents cope with the emotional, religious, social and physical consequences of a loved one's death.

Breaking the Silence

by Linda Goldman

A guide to help children complicated grief.

Bereaved Children and Teens

by Earl Grollman

Preparing the Children

by Kathy Nussbaum

Information and ideas for families facing terminal illness and death.

How Do We Tell the Children?

Dan Schaffer

A step by step guide for helping children, ages 2 to teen, cope when someone dies.

The Invisible String

by Patrice Karst

Addresses children's fear of being apart from the ones they love. Though we may be separated from the ones we care for, love is the unending connection.

Web Resources for Adults

nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/bereavement.html

medlineplus.gov/spanish

Wide array of information in dealing with grief.

Among the many topics covered are: coping with loss, symptoms of grieving and helping a child deal with death. This site is available in English and Spanish.

griefhelpsacramento.com

Community Bereavement Resource Directory, Sacramento Region. You can reach the Community Bereavement Resource Directory, Sacramento Region by phone at 916-557-5882.

elderhope.com

A good resource for understanding adult and children's grief and helping children to cope with grief.

centering.org

Offers grief resources in the form of books, videos, cards, games and activities. It is categorized in a simple way to help focus on the needs of each individual or family, such as "children and grief," "teens and adolescents" and "anticipatory grief." Spanish books also available.

dougy.org

Provides resources for grieving children and families, while also providing support and training locally, nationally and internationally to individuals and organizations seeking to assist children in grief.

griefwatch.com

Provides grieving persons with bereavement resources, memorial products and links to help them through their personal loss.

aarp.org

AARP website provides the grieving persons with bereavement resource links to help them through their personal loss.

Books for Children and Teens

Children

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf by Leo Buscaglia

The story of life, death and the changing seasons of life. Less concrete and more spiritually oriented.

Where's Jess?

by Joy and Mary Johnson

A book for siblings and their families - ages 3 to 6.

How It Feels When a Parent Dies

by Jill Krementz

Children speak openly about their experiences with the death of a parent – ages 9 and up.

Lifetimes

by Bryan Mellonie

This author uses beautiful illustrations that provide a visual and safe way to begin explaining death to young children.

Sad Isn't Bad: A good-grief guidebook for kids dealing with loss

by Michaelene Mundy

From Elf Help books for kids.

Love You Forever

by Robert Munsch

A book about unconditional love and growing older, explains the cycle of life. Beautiful for all ages.

The Kids Book about Death and Dying

by Eric E. Rofes

By and for kids.

Tear Soup

by Pat Schweibert

Grief Watch, 2003. A recipe for healing after loss for all ages.

The Saddest Time

by Norma Simon

Explains death as the inevitable end of life and provides three situations in which children experience powerful emotions when someone close has died— age 5 and older.

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Kids

by Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Simple advice and activities for children after a death.

Teens

The Common Threads of Teenage Grief

by Teens Who Know and Janet Tyson

Written by a middle school counselor and nine teens.

Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love

by E. Grollman

This book speaks to teens in a way that acknowledges their feelings, promotes discussion and offers hope.

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens

by Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Practical, simple to use resource for teenagers coping with grief.

Web Resources for Children

Because each family is different and unique, it is recommended that parents or caregivers review these sites for themselves to decide if they meet with their personal approval before allowing their children to access these sites.

rd4u.org.uk

Designed for young people by young people.

It is called "RD4U" and is sponsored by Cruse Bereavement Care in the United Kingdom. The main aim of the site is to let youth find their own "road" to dealing with their loss. This site includes games, a message board and trained volunteers to answer private emails sent in by youth dealing with the loss of a loved one.

kidsaid.com

KIDSAID is a safe place for kids to share and to help each other deal with grief about any of their losses. It is a place to share and deal with feelings, to show artwork and stories, to talk about pets and to meet with one's peers.

Multicultural Resources for Adults and Children

2-1-1 Sacramento

916-498-1000 or 800-500-4931 |
211sacramento.org

Any Language

Information, referral and interpreting services for many different languages.
916-498-1000

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

NorCal Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Deaf community and hard of hearing; Counseling, referrals and interpreting for deaf and HOH.
4044 N. Freeway Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95834
916-349-7500 V/TTD | norcalcenter.org

Spanish

Los Ninos y el Luto

Provided by: All Family Resources
415-209-0502 | familymanagement.com

La Familia Counseling Center

5523 34th Street, Sacramento, CA 95820
916-452-3601 | TDD 800-735-2929 or 711
lafcc.org

Asian

Asian Community Center Administration

7311 Greenhaven Dr., Suite 187
Sacramento, CA 95831
916-394-6399 | accsv.org/who-we-are/index.php

Asian Pacific Community

Short-term counseling and referral; most Asian languages
7273 14th Ave., Suite 120, Sacramento, CA 95820
916-383-6783 | apccounseling.org

Gifts in Memory

Gifts in memory of your loved one may be made to **Sutter Medical Center Foundation** at 2825 Capitol Ave, Buhler Specialty Pavilion, Suite 420, Sacramento CA 95816. 916-887-7077.

For a supply of pre-addressed envelopes or for more information, call 916-887-7077. Credit card gifts may be made online at **sutterhealth.org/ways-to-give/philanthropy/give-now**. The family will be notified of the donor name but not the gift amount.

Sutter Medical Center Foundation is a philanthropic organization that supports the programs and services at Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento. Donations help provide programs, services and equipment not covered by insurance and help provide the margin of excellence as well as healing environment for patients and their families. Gifts are used for the service stated by the donor as designated by the Board of Trustees.

Electronic copy available at **suttermedicalcenter.org/spiritualcare**.

