



Ask to Come Home. Ask for Caldwell Hospice.



Healing Hearts

Support for parents who have experienced the loss of a child

The greatest gifts between us and the one we are now missing can never be worn out, weathered, exchanged, or returned. For we gave each other something that can never be taken from us— a treasure of memories. — Wanda Y. Johnson

With the death of a child, all your hopes, dreams, and plans for the future are turned upside down. The natural order is for parents to precede their children in death, but now you must adapt to a reality that makes no sense. At first, you may feel numb or dazed and have a sense of disbelief. These feelings serve a valuable purpose—to protect you mentally by giving your emotions time to catch up with what your mind has told you. The disbelief helps insulate you from reality until you are more able to tolerate and accept the truth. Then, waves of varying emotions hit.

Healing Hearts provides an emotionally safe environment for parents who need to express their pain, find acceptance for their feelings, and explore ways to cope with their day-to-day struggles, as they grieve the loss of a child. This no-cost, six-week group, sponsored by Ashewood Grief and Counseling Services, is open to any parent who has experienced the loss of a son or daughter of any age. To find out when the next group begins, call Ashewood at 828.754.0101.

Common Reactions to Loss

Grief is a natural reaction to loss, and each of us will experience it in our own unique way and time.

Some common reactions may include:

- Disbelief that the loss actually occurred
- Numbness
- Loneliness, as if there's a hole in your heart
- Feeling like you are losing your mind
- Restlessness and need for activity
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lack of interest in activities
- Loss of appetite
- Difficulty sleeping
- Guilt or anger over what happened or didn't happen
- Feeling abandoned by the loved one
- Crying at unexpected times

Tips for Taking Care of Yourself

Staying healthy—mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually—will ease your journey through grief.

1. **Exercise.**
2. **Cry when you feel like it.**
3. **Talk about your feelings with someone you trust.** Find someone who can listen, without having to "fix" it.
4. **Keep a journal.** Writing your thoughts helps you to further your healing.
5. **Pray/Meditate.** Pray for help as you begin to cope with the changes in your own life. Meditate about your memory of the person who has died.
6. **Breathe.** Inhale deeply through your nose to the count of eight. Then exhale very slowly through your mouth to the count of eight. Repeat.
7. **Read.** The more you know about grief and how other people have survived it, the better.
8. **Visit your physician for regular check-ups.**

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