

Saskatoon Council on Aging (SCOA) BEREAVEMENT RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Feelings of sadness and sorrow are natural when someone you love dies and you are bereaved. This can be a distressing and confusing time. People use various words and phrases to describe the experience.

- **Grief** is the individual person's response to loss. It has been said that grief is the 'price' we pay for having loved and lost. Grief has many dimensions and may affect us physically, emotionally (feelings), cognitively (thinking) and behaviourally (activities and social interactions). Other areas affected may include memory, concentration, focus and spiritual/existential questions of meaning/purpose beliefs.

- **Mourning** includes the wider communal response. It can include what you and friends, neighbours and fellow members of an organization or group do together in response to loss/death. It can also include reaching out to counsellors, grief support programs and community resources. Social support has been shown to be among the things that help the most in healing and living through the grieving process.

Additional Thoughts on Loss, Grief and Mourning

Loss sometimes feels like we've been torn apart or that our heart has been broken. This can have a profound effect on us at any age. Sometimes the death of a loved one strikes us as being a violation of the natural order of things. A powerful example is being bereaved of a child regardless of their age. We can be left with feelings of intense survivor guilt. The stress of bereavement can lead to poor physical health, weight loss or gain, disturbed sleep, change in activity levels and motivation to be around other people.

Grief can also challenge our sense of identity ("Who I am now without my loved one?"), our relationships with others, and our sense of purpose in life.

Sometimes grief is described as complicated. Complicated grief may come out of the particular circumstances of the death, the nature of the relationship with the deceased, social and economic situations, past or present mental health conditions (e.g., depression), as well as the availability and type of social support. This can lead to thoughts of self-harm or avoidance of the reality of the loss by using alcohol or drugs.

In some other circumstances, the person's death may be seen in a less disturbing way. The bereaved person may feel relief at the end of suffering of their loved one. There is no one way to grieve. Different people have different grieving styles.

We feel grief because we have loved and have had a relationship with the person who died. It does not have to be a spouse or family member for us to feel grief. Attachment relationships of all kinds exist ... close friends, neighbours, co-workers, colleagues, students/teachers, mentors and companion animals. The nature of our grief is a reflection of our relationship with the person/being who died. It reflects what the relationship meant to us in our lives.

Time can take on a whole different dimension in grieving. There is no timeframe for this process. For decades, there was a belief that grieving people moved in a logical step-wise fashion toward resolution of their grief. The concept of orderly "stages" of grief has been replaced with more accurate ideas. One notion is that of a "continuing bond" which means that a variety of connections between the living and the dead continue and are helpful in the grieving process. No one approach fits all. It is important to be mindful of cultural differences in mourning.

Grief is a process, not an event. It is unique to the person. What is helpful for one may not be helpful for the next. This also applies to what we read in the grief and bereavement 'self-help' literature. Like the old saying goes: "Take what's helpful, and leave the rest."

Beyond the loss of your loved one, there may be what are called, secondary losses. These might sometimes go unrecognized by those around you. Examples include the loss of financial security, lifestyle, role, identity (e.g., I'm not half of a couple anymore), plans, hopes and dreams.

The Resource Directory listed below includes a range of potential supports including counselling, grief support groups, websites and places. Inclusion in this listing does not necessarily imply endorsement by SCOA but is here for informational purposes.

Please reach out and let people reach in - you are not alone.

Initial Hospital Bereavement Follow-up

- St. Paul's Hospital (306-655-5000); ask operator to page Spiritual Care
- Royal University Hospital (306-655-1249)
- Saskatoon City Hospital (306-655-8250)

Inter-denominational memorial services are held for family and friends of those who have died in previous months.

Health Sponsored Grief Programs

- Community Social Work: (306-655-3400)
 - Individual counselling (CPAS referrals needed)
 - Caregiver groups: for people providing care for a family member or friend
 - Bereavement Support Group for women of all ages: Professionally facilitated, focusing on changes that loss brings. 6 week long program with a maximum of 10 participants. Free registration: (306-655-3424)
- Palliative Care Services: (306-655-0573)
 - Walk of Memories, on a Sunday in late August.
 - Individual grief support offered by Anna Marie Buhr, MSW (Registered Social Worker)

Church Based Programs:

- Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Family (306-659-5800)
 - *From Mourning to Dawn* grief group for men and women. 8 week long program followed by monthly grief support evenings.
- Cornerstone Church: (306-931-4949) *Grief Talk*; Wednesday evening meetings at 7 pm.
- Emmanuel Baptist Church (306-477-1234)
 - *Grief Share*: Thursdays at 10:30 am (5 sessions)
 - *Grief Resolution*: 8 week group facilitated by K. Gibson, psychologist
- St. Martens United Church (306-343-7101)
 - *Saskatoon Contacts for the Widowed*: Meets the third Sunday monthly from 2:30-4 pm (except July, August, December). Fees of \$25/year, welcoming all widows. Contact Mildred Shipley 306-242-3905.

Edwards Family Centre:

- 333-4th Ave. North. 306-244-5577 (ask for Eleanor Edwards)
- Grief and Loss lending library (books, DVDs, brochures, information)
 - Prairie View Meditative Walk and labyrinth (south on Highway 11)
 - Community Seminar Room used by several nonprofit care-giving groups

- Grief Support Groups offered (free), pre-registration is required (e.g., Bereaved Parents of Adult Children, Teen Grief Group, Loss in Mid-Life, Partner Loss Support Group, Men and Grief, others as needed). Facilitated by Dr. Phil Carverhill (Registered Doctoral Psychologist)
- Dr. Phil Carverhill (fee-for-service) grief counselling/therapy for individuals, couples, families and grief workshops/seminars. (306-651-7445)

Central Urban Metis Federation

- Sandy Smokeyday (639-998-5432)
- Offers grief counselling and workshops for First Nations and Metis

Prairie Hospice Society 306-249-5554

Contacts: Volunteer Coordinators - Sheila Morgan or Rick Schellenberg
 Details: Compassionate non-medical care, companionship and respite for those facing advanced illness, death and bereavement in the comfort of home.

- Volunteer training provided.
- Referrals from individual and health related agencies.

Soaring Spirits International

- soaring spirits.org
- International peer-based, community-building organization based in California, for widowed women and men. World-wide chapters
- *Martensville Regional Group of Soaring Spirits International*
- Monthly dinner and conversation (see website).

Information Sources

- The Saskatoon Public Library (306-975-7558)
- Saskatoon Council on Aging (SCOA) (306-652-2255)
- Yellow pages of phonebook (Psychologists, Counsellors, Funeral Homes)
- The Catholic Family Centre (306-244-7773)
- The Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre (306-244-0174)
- Humanitas Library at the Palliative Unit at St. Paul's Hospital (306-655-0573)
- Canadian Hospice and Palliative Care Association (chpca.ca)
- Canadian Virtual Hospice (virtualhospice.ca)
- Australian Centre for Grief & Bereavement (grief.org.au)
- Edwards Family Centre: Grief Resource Lending Library (306-244-5577)
- Victoria Hospice (victoriahospice.org)

If you wish to do personal grief journaling, consider Alan Wolfelt's "Understanding Your Grief Journey" (2004). His accompanying text, "Understanding Your Grief: (2003). Both available through McNally Robinson Booksellers in Saskatoon or Companion Press, Fort Collins, Colorado

