



# DAYBREAK

In touch during a time of grief

## Make Every Day Count

*In **Make Every Day Count**, persons who have lost a loved one will share their experiences. This month, Mary S. recalls how having daily “chores” helped her get through the early weeks and months after the death of her husband.*

“The first month I was often in a daze. But with the help of my family I put one foot in front of the other. They encouraged me to set aside some time each day for practical matters. After the funeral, I spent time writing thank you notes and taking care of banking matters. I decided to spend time going through my husband’s possessions and selecting something special for each one of my children and grandchildren. My husband loved books, so I picked some of his favorites and sent them, with a note, to his closest friends. My daughter suggested that each day I make a handwritten list of the things I could accomplish. I didn’t always get to everything. Some days, I just cried. But making a list of tasks helped give those days a sense of order that was really helpful.”

**In recent weeks**, you have experienced the loss of a loved one. To help you during this difficult time, the hospice services of Advocate Aurora Health at Home would like to present *Daybreak*, a monthly communication that will provide compassionate support and guidance. Each issue of Daybreak will include information on the bereavement process, as well as insights from others who have experienced the death of a loved one. We hope this communication, along with our bereavement program, will help you and your family find hope and strength in the months to come.

## Grief...A Normal, Natural Response

**Grief is the normal and natural response to the death of a loved one.**

Grief takes many forms. It may be experienced in a combination of emotional, physical or social reactions. Emotional reactions can include anger, guilt, anxiety, sadness and despair. Physical manifestations of grief might include sleeping problems, changes in appetite, or even illness.



The depth of grief you experience is related to the relationship with the person who died and the situation surrounding the death...whether it was sudden, unexpected, or occurred after a long illness. Some people don’t realize that “symptoms” suffered after a loss are actually related to grief. For example, you might have difficulty concentrating, experience overwhelming sadness, feel guilty or angry, or notice changes in the way you normally act or feel. You might feel numb. Any or all of these reactions are normal.

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# Remember...there is no right or wrong way to grieve after a significant loss.

## The Bereavement Process

“Bereavement” is the term we use to describe the period of grieving after the loss of a loved one. The time spent in bereavement varies from person to person. But no matter how long the bereavement process, there are four phases that most people experience:

**Shock and numbness.** You may be feeling numb right now. This is the most common feeling described by grieving people during the first few weeks or months after a loved one has died. Some people say they feel “stunned.” They say it is difficult for them to believe that their loved one has really died.

**Yearning and searching.** As your numbness disappears, you may begin to “forget” that your loved one has died. You may catch a glimpse of someone who looks like your loved one, causing your heart to lighten for an instant. You may return home one day and expect your loved one to be there. These are normal reactions.

**Disorganization and despair.** As the reality of your loss sets in, you may begin to feel depressed and unable to think about the future. You might become easily distracted or have difficulty concentrating and focusing on a task.

**Reorganization.** As you begin to adjust to the changes in your life, you will begin to have a sense of reorganization and renewal. Though life will be forever changed because of your loss, you will begin to learn how to move on. You will not forget your loved one...you will learn to live with the loss.



## We Are Here To Help

It's important to talk about your loss with compassionate friends and family. Many people also seek the comfort of support groups during this difficult time. The Daybreak Bereavement Program, provided by the hospice services of Advocate Aurora Health at Home, offers a wide range of opportunities for individual or group support. For more information, or talk to a bereavement counselor, please contact:

- Illinois 800-813-5185
- Wisconsin 800-862-2201