



# DAYBREAK

In touch during a time of grief

## Make Every Day Count

*In **Make Every Day Count**, persons who have lost a loved one share their experiences. This month, Jim H., whose wife died suddenly, recalls the many emotions he felt in the first few months.*

“Of course the first emotions I felt were shock and disbelief. My wife had never been sick and then suddenly she died. I had a lot of questions, but no one could answer them.

I admit I felt sorry for myself. I thought no one could understand me. I didn't want to talk to anyone about this because I felt I should be the strong one for the sake of my kids and grandchildren. When friends and family members would call and ask how I was doing, I would say, 'Fine.' But I wasn't really fine. After the shock, my main feeling was one of anger that this happened to her...and to me. I didn't lash out at anyone, but I could feel anger getting the best of me. I lost interest in being with my friends. Then, I began to think about what my wife would want for me, and I knew she would say 'Get moving...' I started out by getting active. I took a walk after dinner most nights, and I said yes a few times when people asked me out. Little by little, I joined the human race again. It's been tough, but my friends and family stuck with me. I am glad they did.”

## Grieving... a Rollercoaster Ride

It's been about six months since the death of your loved one. You have probably already experienced many of the emotions that are common during the grieving process. There are so many feelings that may surface during this time. The ups and downs of the grieving process may make you feel like you're coming “unglued.” All of the emotions you feel are normal during this time.

### **You may already realize two common reactions are anger and guilt.**

**Anger...**This is one of the most common reactions to a loved one's death. And, since most of us are taught from childhood that we should control our anger, this can pose a problem. What do we do with our anger? Some may focus it on friends, family members, doctors, nurses or God. Some may even turn their anger on the deceased, with thoughts such as “he didn't take care of himself.”

Many people turn anger on themselves. They ask “Why didn't I do something?” or “Did I give my wife the care she needed?”



If you are feeling angry, you should know that you are not alone. This is a normal reaction during the grieving process. It's important to remember, too, that anger turned inward can cause emotional and physical symptoms. You must try to find a safe way to express your anger. Talk with someone who will listen...and not judge.

Write your thoughts in a journal...or a letter to a trusted friend.

*continued on back*

**Guilt...**Very few survivors escape feelings of guilt. These feelings are normal. An unanticipated reaction, guilt is also usually unwarranted. Many grieving persons find themselves reliving situations, asking themselves, “Should I have done things differently?” or “Was I patient and loving enough?” Guilt is a reaction that causes pain. You need to understand that these are feelings that should be acknowledged and talked about honestly with family, friends, or in a support group setting. If your feelings of guilt are not dealt with, they can lead to lingering regrets, which can slow down the grief recovery process.

**Get physical...**an exercise routine, walking, even undertaking some projects around the home, can help you work out your anger in a safe way.



## The Sixth-Month Blues

Just about the time people are telling you it’s time to “get back to normal,” you may feel worse than ever. In fact, some bereaved people find that the six-month mark is the most difficult time. Some grieving people may even feel a wave of depression setting in at about this time. If this sounds familiar, there are some things you should know.

Depression can result in many physical symptoms. Are you experiencing:

- Insomnia
- Loss of appetite
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Excessive crying
- Feelings of isolation

If you’re experiencing several of these symptoms, you may be suffering from depression and you should contact your physician or a grief counselor. He or she can help, prescribing a medication, counseling, or a number of other strategies to help you through this difficult time.

## 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