

How Do I Know I'm Getting Better?

(Summary of a workshop presented by Dr. Bob Baugher)

Summary

Introduction (.....and Caution)

- As you read this article, don't fall into the trap of adding up a "score" – grief doesn't work that way. You do not have to grieve "perfectly".
- Some of these markers will never apply to you.
- Most people report that the changes/markers listed here emerged gradually, sometimes almost without immediate notice over the years. Getting better was through their own individual work on grief and that this took place in the context of a great deal of pain.
- Many of the markers of getting better seem to cluster together. For example, as one's concentration improves, so does driving, social interactions, work, and hobbies.

Dr. Baugher had many ideas, markers, and changes to help us to check out our progress as long as we keep in mind the above caution. For this article I am using some of them and because it helped me, I am placing them into three groups: **Thinking, Feelings, and Action/Doing**. However, there is some overlap between each of these behaviors.

Thinking

- I know both truths: I am moving on with life, BUT, I will never forget. Moving on doesn't mean that I will love my loved one less.
- I realize that some questions I have about my loved one's death will never be answered.
- I can look back and see my progress.
- I can see the memory of my loved one as less "saintly" (They weren't perfect.)
- I realize that so-called "acceptance" doesn't mean that I have gotten over it, that is, I have come to see that I will never "get over" it – and this is OK.
- I don't think of my loved one every minute and that is OK.

Feelings

- I feel better about myself.
- The emotional roller coaster isn't as bad as it used to be.
- I have worked through the hard parts to get to the positive.
- Sometimes a whole day can slip by without feeling overwhelmed.
- I suddenly catch myself enjoying something.

Action/Doing

- I want to do more with my life than "just survive".
- I have come to realize that doing little things for myself is OK.
- I can engage in activities I used to do and in new activities as well.
- I don't do so much aimless wandering and looking for something to do.
- I can give up or put away some of my loved one's belongings, keep others and feel OK.
- I am able to reach out and help others.

I'll Sure As Heck Know I'm Better When.....

- ☺ I remember driving down the freeway.
- ☺ I have no problem deciding what to have for dinner.
- ☺ I begin to notice that there aren't as many idiots on the freeway.
- ☺ I stop putting my underwear on inside out or backwards.
- ☺ I stop asking where I put the _____ while holding it in my hand.
- ☺ I can begin a project and finish it.
- ☺ I get finished with a meal and have forgotten nothing in the oven.
- ☺ I can go to a movie and later remember what it was about when someone asks me.
- ☺ I have enough energy to put one foot in front of the other.
- ☺ I have fewer "Here-After" problems, that is, I can walk into the other room and not always say, "What am I here after?"
- ☺ I can remember my best friend's name in the middle of introducing him/her.
- ☺ I don't always forget what I am going to say when in the middle of an argument.
- ☺ I can sleep.
- ☺ I don't feel like screaming at people who say stupid things.
- ☺ I can call people and remember who I am calling or why I called them.