

Grief Makes a Promise
By Bob Baugher, Ph.D.

I feel like I'm going crazy.

[Grief speaks] Come sit down, let's talk.

Not you! Leave me alone! You have moved into my life and you won't leave. Everywhere I look there you are, staring me in the face, filling my life with pain.

[Grief responds] I know. But just hear me out, OK?

I'm tired of listening to you. Tired of feeling so many things: confused, sad, hopeless, angry, anxious, guilty, helpless, isolated, empty, alone, exhausted, lost, fearful.

[Grief firmly] You're supposed to have feelings. You're human.

Look, you don't understand. Someone I care for very much has died and it hurts. It hurts so bad I can't stand it. Sometimes I don't even want to be here.

[Grief, comforting] I hear you. But if you never loved, you'd never grieve. What you feel is normal.

No, it's not. Everyone says I'm well, they say I'm grieving too much. They're worried about me. They say that it's time to move on. They say words like:

Closure, heal accept, recover, get over it.

[Grief, softly} And you can't?

Well, no. Not like they want me to. I can't put closure on my love. My love did not die. I can't wake up one day and suddenly exclaim, "I'm healed." I'll never completely heal, I certainly will not "accept" or "recover" from this death. And I will never "get over" it as if this is a problem that can be fixed.

[Grief whispers] You don't have to.

What do you mean?

Everyone grieves differently. And you grieve however you are going to grieve. You had a unique relationship with your loved one - a relationship that no one can ever understand.

So, what am I supposed to do?

[Grief, moving closer] Five things. *First:* grieve: feel your grief. That's why I'm in your life. So you can begin to feel again. Even though you don't like what you feel. and not judge. Find a way to get all those bottled up feelings out so they don't go round and round with no place to go. Find those people who will listen. *Second:* talk it out with people who are willing to listen and not judge. Find a way to get all those bottled up feelings out so that they don't go round and round with no place to go. Find those people who will listen.

They're out there. Do it! *Third:* realize that everyone grieves differently.

Respect this. *Fourth:* live! Even though at times you don't feel like putting one foot in front of the other. Your job is to live your life, despite all the changes you've gone through, despite all the pain. *And fifth,* talk about your loved one. Say his or her name. Tell your loved one's life story. This person lived a life. Find people who will listen to the stories and who will in turn tell you their stories of your loved one. Your love for this person will never go away. You will always carry it in your heart.

[Grief offering a handshake] And finally, I make you a promise.

[Shaking hands] You? Grief are making me a promise?

[Grief responds] Yes, my promise to you is: As terrible as you feel now, you will not feel this way forever. There will be times that you will laugh. Times where your confusion, your sadness, hopelessness, your anger, anxiety, guilt, helplessness, your isolation, emptiness, loneliness, exhaustion, and fear will not feel so intense. Do not get me wrong. You will never forget your loved one. And feeling less grief does not mean that you are forgetting this person. Now, I want you to say your loved one's name. Go ahead, say it. It's a precious name.

_____ Take the memories. Put them in your heart. Feel them there. Please trust me that feeling less grief does not mean you are forgetting your loved one. Your loved one will always be in your heart. Always. I promise.

(Special thanks to Janee Baugher for her editorial input) Dr. Bob Baugher is a psychology instructor at Highline Community College. He received his Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University and has been involved in death education for many years. He is a national known speaker and author. *Our very sincere thanks to Dr. Baugher for all that he has done for WICS throughout the years!*