



## ***"G-R-I-E-F — More Than Just a Five Letter Word"***

For years, Dr. Paul T. Clements, PHD, RN, CS, an assistant Professor at the UNM College of Nursing, provided help to families of murder with his information about grief. He produced a paper entitled "*G-R-I-E-F — More than Just a Five Letter Word*" which we still use to help families understand and heal from the grief of the loss of someone to violent death. Here are some key points from his article:

**In the beginning:** "Shock and numbness are normal reactions in the very beginning of the grief process. You may feel alone and the grieving and mourning can be a roller coaster ride of emotions. Grief can affect you mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. The only way to get through grief is to go all the way in and to go all the way through it – which can be a frightening thought." Here are some helpful hints on the path:

- ✓ **Set goals for yourself – start with small short ones**
- ✓ **Accept that what you are feeling is real and painful**
- ✓ **Know that you must mourn the loss and allow yourself to do just that**
- ✓ **Cry when you feel like crying**
- ✓ **Don't try to do this process alone and don't avoid those who care for/about you**
- ✓ **Don't allow guilt or fear to set you back**
- ✓ **Experience your thoughts and feelings a day at a time**

**Responses to grieving:** "Each person grieves differently and at his/her own speed. It is important not to try to rush through your grief. Don't be too hard on yourself by thinking you should be feeling well and be "over it" in a month or two. Grief related symptoms are typical for at least the first year, and may be considered normal for up to two years. Never feel it is a failure to seek or accept assistance. Getting/accepting help reveals strength and not failure."

- ✓ **Don't let others define your loss for you**
- ✓ **Allow yourself to "backslide"**
- ✓ **Contact your health-care provider for help if the symptoms persist**
- ✓ **It is OK to repeat the story of your loss over and over again – this helps you explore what the loss means to you. Support groups will listen over and over again**
- ✓ **Don't allow others to talk you into making major decisions within the first year of your loss**

**A final thought:** "The goal of good grief is not to try to forget the loss, but to remember your loved one, begin to put the loss into perspective in your own personal life history, and reinvest or find what in life you enjoy. You are not the same person you were before the loss. Know that life will go on and the "new" person you are now will learn to live the life that is now your future."

***"Grief is love with no place to go."***