

The article below was written by Bill Cushnie and published on the Hello Grief website.

“Regaining Confidence in Life”

Losing someone you love can seriously shake your confidence in life. These are the dark days. For most of us the darkness fades over time and, for a few, the darkness lingers for a long time. Grief is unique to each individual and to the circumstances of the loss. However it does matter whether or not you say “yes” or “no” to life as you live the healing journey.

How can we regain confidence in life? Here are a few things I’ve learned for myself and that others have taught me.

1. Take it one day at a time. A yoga teacher of mine often says, “Yesterday is a memory, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift.” Most of us can cope with a challenge one day at a time. Especially in the early days of our grief journey, this is the one thing that gets you through. Confidence in life and the future will break through, but in the beginning, coping with each day as it comes allows us to “get through it.”

2. Lean on friends. As the song says, “Lean on me when you are not strong. I’ll be your friend...” Reach out and ask for what you need. It may be a shoulder to cry on, or child care so you have a day to yourself, or a “night out” companion just to talk, or anything else you need to help you through your grief journey. Most people want to help, but don’t know how. Friends need you to tell them what they can do. If some friends just don’t “get it,” move on until you find someone who does. Don’t be afraid to ask for help, your friends may need someone to lean on some day, wouldn’t you want to be that person?

3. Share with others how you feel. It’s amazing how just saying the feelings we have out loud softens them, or puts them in perspective, or helps us make a connection. Sometimes we hold back for fear of upsetting others, and they do the same. Talking about feelings can be hard, but it’s also healing. For some, talking with a grief counselor is a start. For others, testing the waters with a family member or friend works.

4. Understand that you can be happy again. To be happy again does not mean you are being unfaithful or disloyal to the person you lost. Your connection to them will always be a part of you. They loved you, and would want you to be happy. We all deserve to be happy and to seek happiness. It’s just a new, and, perhaps, a different happiness. While immediately after losing a loved one this may seem impossible, your future can be good, and will include happiness again.

5. Find strength and calm in quiet time or meditation. When I meditate I like to use a two syllable word to keep my focus. On the inhale I say the first syllable and on the exhale I say the second syllable. I pick the words to suit what I need that day. (peace-ful, sha-loam, friend-ship, re-lax, re-store, faith-ful, com-passion, prayer-ful). You can also use it to fall asleep at night... rest-ful, love -ing. Being quiet or still can be restorative and provide balance when trying to fill every minute with something to do, to shut out the pain of loss.

Regaining confidence in life can be a slow process, but it can be a forward moving process when we take good care of ourselves. Someone once said, "The world breaks everyone, and afterwards many are stronger at the broken places."

One day at a time, lean on friends, share what you feel, be happy again, quiet yourself and let the healing take place.

Thinking of You,

Bereavement Coordinator