

A Care-giver's Grief

Sometimes my world
Doesn't feel safe.

There is a longing to escape
From the burden of care

The heaviness
Of grief.

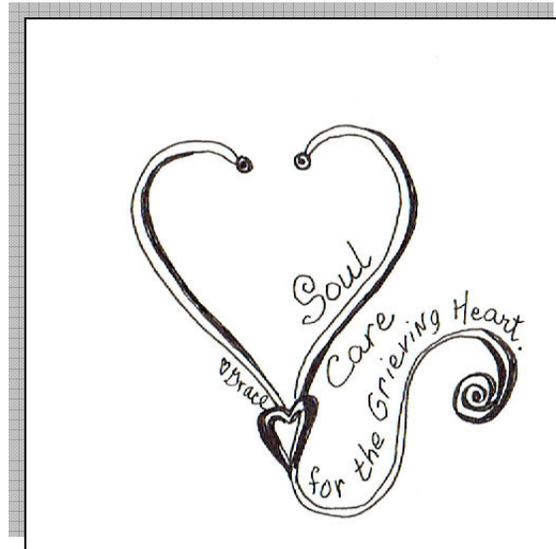
The needs never ending
Resources dwindling

And I remember that
For all whom I care for

For that one
Whom I cared for
It was a special gift.

Sometimes that one
Is ME.

-Grace Wulff 2016



Finding Your Way

When Staff are Affected by Grief

Grief can broadside us, and sometimes we don't even recognize it.

Grief, for the professional, might feel like a weakness, and easily buried as one continues the task of caring, and doing and completing the task at hand.

But if we don't recognize it at some point, grief can reach a saturation point where a person can break down, either physically, mentally, or spiritually.

Written by Chaplain Grace Wulff

May you know the comfort

That you are not alone

Grief common to the human race

We are the hands and feet

And voice of LOVE.

shared... and received.

When the Grief is Personal

Tragedy usually is something that happens to someone else, and when it becomes our own story, all the rules change.

If we are grieving a family member, whether it is our mother or father, our spouse, or a child, or a close friend, we are deeply affected. Getting support is critical.

And then there are times when we carry things – waiting for a diagnosis, caring for a challenging or aging parent, managing challenging family dynamics – and it is difficult to speak of these things.

Health professionals know that caring for themselves is essential, but sometimes it is very hard to take that first step. Talking to a trusted friend, a team leader, a counselor can help.

Sometimes it will be what triggers us that shows us we need help. Emotions that are hard to check, such as tears or emotional outbursts can be reminders that we need help.



When a Patient or Resident Dies

This is a reality at a hospital or workplace.

The other reality is that we are human, and some deaths are very difficult and impact us greatly.

It would be normal to question what we could have done differently, or review scenes over and over again.

And often, before we really are able to process what happened, the next scene is waiting for our undivided attention.

How does staff cope with this?

It is a question I ask, because I admire their dedication, their caring, and their professionalism.

After one difficult morning I was invited to share in a lunch with a few colleagues where we were able to talk about what happened and support one another.

There might also be ways to acknowledge the life of the person who died, and this might help staff to grieve.

Some units light a candle after a death. Others might have special memory books where they might record names or keep notes from the family.

Debriefing and caring for one another as a staff can be helpful as we process the pain we feel when someone dies.

When a Colleague Dies

Facing our vulnerability when a colleague dies can be very challenging.

Continuing with work, caring for those who have no idea of our own pain, facing our own grief can take much energy and a toll on our bodies and minds.

Grieving is not a sign of weakness. Acknowledging our own pain, with someone we feel safe with is critical to our own health.

Grieving collectively can also be part of the healing. A private room where staff can gather and pay their respects can be helpful. A memorial service on-site for those who cannot attend a family service can also provide a way to remember. Gifts of care to the family or a bursary set up in the person's honour all are ways to give honour and respect to the colleague who has died.

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