



**LIFEPATH**  
H O S P I C E

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## July 2014 Support Groups

### **NEW BEGINNINGS ADULT GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS**

An eight-week support group for adults grieving the loss of a loved one.

**Thursdays, July 3 – August 21**

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Serenity Meadows

### **PET LOSS GROUP**

A new group focused on dealing with the loss of a pet.

**Mondays, July 21 – August 11**

3:30 – 5:00 pm

South Tampa

### **CIRCLE OF LOVE CENTER FOR GRIEVING CHILDREN**

Provides ongoing evening support group meetings for children, ages 3 – 18, and their families who have experienced the death of a loved one. Volunteers are at the heart of our Center and are always needed! For additional information about the center or volunteer training, please contact Ashley Musolino at (813)357-5671.

### **CIRCLE OF FRIENDS**

A monthly group for those who have completed the eight-week New Beginnings grief support group and who are interested in social interaction with other survivors. Call 357-5609 for additional information.

## LifePath Hospice Bereavement Programs

After the loss of a loved one, some survivors may find that the pain associated with that loss doesn't always lessen with time. Support groups provide a safe place to express feelings, share experiences, learn about grief and move ahead in the grief process. LifePath Hospice will provide various support groups, retreats and seminars throughout the upcoming year. It is our hope that you will take advantage of the programs that best suit your particular needs and circumstances.

You do not have to be the loved one of a LifePath Hospice patient to participate in these support groups and retreats. LifePath Hospice is pleased to offer any resident of Hillsborough, Polk, Hardee or Highlands county, who has experienced the death of a loved one, the opportunity to attend all of our programs. Please call for program availability – preregistration is required for all offerings.

For additional information, or to register, please contact Diane Schnelly at LifePath Hospice at (813) 877-2200 ext. 10609, or 1-800-209-2200.

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# Explosive Emotions

by Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD

Anger, hate, blame, terror, resentment, rage and jealousy are explosive emotions that may be a volatile yet natural part of your grief journey. It helps to understand that all these feelings are, at bottom, a form of protest. Think of a toddler whose favorite toy is yanked out of his hands. This toddler wants the toy; when it's taken, his instinctive reaction may be to scream or cry or hit. When someone loved is taken from you, your instinctive reaction may be much the same.

Explosive emotions may surface at any time when someone you have loved dies. You cry out in anguish, "How could this happen? This isn't fair! I hate this!" You may direct these emotions at the person who died, at friends and family members, at doctors, at people who haven't experienced loss, at God.

Unfortunately, our society doesn't understand how normal and necessary these feelings can be. Demonstrating emotional hurts is wrong. The implicit message is that you should try to "keep it together." When you're raging or terrified, others may get upset. The intensity of your own emotions may even upset you. Still, you must give yourself permission to feel whatever you feel and to express those feelings. If you collaborate with the well-intentioned but misinformed people around you, your body, mind and spirit will probably be damaged in the process.

Some people may tell you that explosive emotions are not logical. "Anger won't bring him back," they might say. "He didn't mean to die, so don't be mad at him." Watch out. You might find yourself buying into this rational thinking. That's just the problem – thinking is logical; feeling is not. Another problem is that people oversimplify explosive emotions by talking only about anger. Actually, you may experience a whole range of intense feelings such as those listed above. Underneath these emotions are usually feelings of pain, helplessness, fear and hurt.

If explosive emotions are part of your journey (and they aren't for everyone), be aware that you have two avenues for expression – outward or inward. The outward avenue leads to healing; the inward avenue does not. Keeping your explosive emotions inside leads to low self-esteem, depression, guilt, physical

complaints and sometimes even persistent thoughts of suicide.

Experiencing explosive emotions is normal. They should, however, change in intensity and duration as you do the work of mourning. Again, I want to emphasize that the key is finding someone who will help you understand what you are feeling and allow you to embrace your grief. Remember – you can't go around your grief, or over it, or under it, you must go through it. I hope that as you journey through grief you will be surrounded by people who understand, support and love you and will help you explore your emotions without trying to stifle you.

**Self-Care Guidelines** Explosive emotions must be expressed, not repressed or worse yet, totally denied. Don't prescribe these feelings for yourself but do be alert for them. You will need a supportive listener who can tolerate, encourage and validate your explosive emotions without judging, retaliating or arguing with you. The comforting presence of someone who cares about you will help you seek continued self-understanding of your grief experience.

Be aware, though, of the difference between the right to feel explosive emotions and the right to act out these emotions in harmful ways. It's okay, sometimes even necessary, to feel angry. But if you hurt others or yourself or destroy property, the people who care about you will need to set limits on your behavior. Also, remind yourself that explosive emotions can often indicate underlying feelings of pain, helplessness, frustration, fear and hurt. Listen to your explosive emotions and you may discover the need to embrace what's beneath.

Keep telling yourself that explosive emotions are not good or bad, right or wrong. They just are. They are your feelings and they are symptoms of an injury that needs nurturing, not judging. Paradoxically, the way to diminish explosive emotions is to experience them, even if they feel irrational to you.

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