

All in the Family

His son keeps thinking of ways his father's death might have been prevented or at least postponed. One daughter cries and talks freely about how much she misses her father. Her sister quietly creates a beautiful memorial scrapbook. The mother's tears flow in the lonely hours of the night and she openly shares at a weekly grief support group. She also is training for a fundraising run for the cancer that stole her husband's life.

No two people grieve alike which can create misunderstandings in families. One member may assume others do not care about the loved one's death if they are not grieving in the same way. However when family members recognize and validate one another's pain and grieving style they can grow closer together.

To gain understanding, members can ask questions, such as: "How did you react to the death?" "What are you thinking or feeling now?" "What has helped and not helped."

Open communication in a family can promote healing when members talk about their thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Families also benefit from non-verbal mourning, such as drawing pictures, creating memorial keepsakes, planting a tree, or sharing together in one of the deceased's favorite activities.



GriefWorks' is available to accompany families as they mend their hearts and re-landscape their lives. Through Family Huddles and the Family Night Series, as well as through Grief Talk for students and adults, our staff help bereaved individuals and families understand and express the different grieving styles. For more information, please visit www.GriefWorks.org or call (253) 333-9420 or (800) 850-9420.

Grief Tips

Create a memory book.

Compile photographs that document your loved one's life. Arrange them into some sort of order so they tell a story. Add other elements if you want: diplomas, newspaper clippings, awards, accomplishments, reminder of significant events. Put all this in a special binder and keep it out for people to look at if they wish. Go through it on your own if you desire. Reminisce as you do so.



You're Invited!

GriefWorks' 5th Annual Benefit Breakfast

Friday, October 17th

7:00 - 8:30 a.m.

Emerald Downs, Auburn

Come learn how you can join us in mending hearts and re-landscaping lives through Compassion Partners. This year's speaker is the Auburn School District's new superintendent Dr. Kip Herren.

For reservations for this complimentary breakfast or to learn about being a Table Captain or Corporate Sponsor, please call or e-mail Daryl@GriefWorks.org.

Welcome...

GriefWorks board of directors and staff heartily welcome Daryl Thompson as our new executive director. Daryl brings a strong appreciation for non-profit organizations



and human service providers. She has served several years on the City of Auburn's Human Service committee and has also served on several non-profit boards, including ACAP. Her 15 years of service as Auburn School District's PR and Grants supervisor has equipped her with a broad set of skills in community outreach and fundraising.

Using her experience and skills, Daryl is excited to move **GriefWorks** ahead, sustaining and expanding our scope of service. "**GriefWorks** provides a precious, unique service to this community. The dedicated guidance and support of professional bereavement counselors eases the anguish of grief and provides hope for the future for individuals and families," Daryl said. "What a gift to all of us to have **GriefWorks** as a resource for one of the most painful times of life! **GriefWorks**, directly and indirectly, touches us all."

Programs & Services...

For information or to pre-register for a summer or fall group, please contact our office.

Ongoing...

Enumclaw Support Groups:

GriefWorks staff facilitate two support groups at the Enumclaw Public Library. There is no cost or pre-registration for these twice-monthly groups, which are sponsored by Enumclaw Regional Hospital. For information, call (360) 825-2505 or **GriefWorks** (800) 850-9420.

Grief Support Group:

First and third Wednesday of each month, 1-2:30 p.m.

Caregivers Support Group:

First and third Thursday of each month, 1-2:30 p.m.



Ask Dr. Bob

*Everything you wanted to know about loss
but were afraid to ask*

Dear Dr. Bob,

My mother died the day after Mothers' Day, 2006. Dad is still alive. I have two brothers and a sister, ranging in age from 24-35. I'm second oldest. I know that we all grieve differently, but our family is all over the place. For the first three months or so, Dad cried a little. Now he's dating—that's another story. One of my brothers almost refuses to talk about Mom. My sister was

like Dad—cried at first and will talk about Mom, but seems to be done with her grief. My older brother and I talk about Mom whenever it comes up and we still both have a lot of grief issues. I'm not much of a crier, but he is. I just wonder what you would say about a family like ours that lost the same person, have some of the same genes, but grieve so differently.

Mira

Dear Mira,

You captured my main point with your statement "we all grieve differently," and, yes, even in the same family. There are multiple reasons, but let's look at a few. First, each of you had a different relationship with your mother - only one of you can be first born, only one last born, and so on. Second, you are all at a different place in your life. You didn't mention marriage or children, but we know that supportive spouses can help with the bereavement process. Third, stressors that existed prior to your mother's death, such as personal health, depression, and work-related issues, can complicate how each family member grieves. Fourth, despite your shared genetic background, each of you has your own personality. From your brief description, some of your siblings' (and father's) reactions may be related to personality characteristics, such as the ease with which individuals share their feelings with others, the tendency to cry, the ability to identify and admit emotional reactions, and the need to revisit the past. Individual differences in grieving are complex phenomenon. When I did my dissertation research on the perceptions of the widow's bereavement process by her adult child, I found that adult children knew little about their mother's bereavement even five to ten years after the death of their father. And some of these adult children lived with their mothers.

So, Mira, do the best you can to accept these differences, even though it is at times frustrating and confusing. You miss your mother and I'll bet that in their own way, each of your siblings do too. It just may be that you'll never quite understand the private world of their grief. I would guess that if your mother were able to speak to you today, she would wish for you and your siblings to find it in your hearts to accept each other. After all, that's the challenge of all families, isn't it?

Peace,
Dr. Bob

Bob Baugher, Ph.D., has taught for over 25 years and currently is a psychology professor at Highline Community College, where his classes include Death and Life. He has led numerous community and national bereavement workshops as well as written or co-authored several books, including A Guide for the Bereaved Survivor. To learn more about or to order his resources, visit www.GriefWorks.org.

Grant Awarded to GriefWorks

GriefWorks has just been granted \$5,000 from the Ruth Murphy Evans Unrestricted Fund and the Les and Sophie Sussman Fund of the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation. These funds are to specifically support the Grief Talk at School program that **GriefWorks** provides in Pierce County. We are so grateful for this generous gift! It will make a difference in children's and teen's lives.

Founder's Corner



"Every change is a mess in the middle!" is a sign that I acquired many years ago. I've used it often to humorously embrace the reality of being a "mess" while we're adjusting to changes in our lives, particularly those resulting from a death.

Even a summary of all the changes at **GriefWorks** would take more space than is available. New staff and a new (anticipated) address top the list. Daryl Thompson, executive director, and Michele Ray, MA, bereavement specialist have joined the team. Both have skills and abilities that make them wonderful gifts to the sustainability of our programs and services. By the end of August we will be at a new address, which is yet to be revealed.

Do you know of space available? An empty house or office? We need room for four computer stations with phones, four file cabinets, and three bookcases, as well as lots of storage for supplies used in groups. We also need space for individual, group, and Family Night activities. Please take a minute to think of possible places or people. Do you know someone who could contribute to the mission of **GriefWorks** by donating space? Have you seen an empty building that needs a purpose? Experience has taught us that YOU—the friends of **GriefWorks**—are our most valuable resources. Thank you in advance for helping **GriefWorks** relocate!

Besides enlisting your help, I want to assure you that, remarkably, we are not "a mess in the middle." (And not just because we haven't started packing!) Instead, we have an attitude of gratitude for the wonderful people that we are privileged to work with and to serve. We look back over the last 10 years and see that our needs have always been met. We look ahead, and our vision is very much alive! We have the support of the community of Auburn and beyond, and we look forward to seeing our story unfold. Stay tuned! **GriefWorks** is **ON THE MOVE!**

*Mel Erickson, along with Nanette Flynn, founded **GriefWorks** in 1998 as a bereavement resource providing education and support for people grieving a death or seeking to understand the grief process.*

GriefWorks

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