

Caring for families

Along The Way

Helping you understand your
journey through grief.

Provided with the
compliments of

Brenan's
FUNERAL HOMES
& CREMATORIUM



ANTICIPATORY GRIEF: WHAT IS IT?

By John Kennedy Saynor

This winter I took my annual winter vacation. I actually began to plan this vacation last summer. It seemed odd planning a winter vacation while I was still basking in the sun and heat, but in anticipation of how much I dislike winter, I made my reservation and mailed a deposit for my accommodation.

I booked my flight. It was still a long time before departure day, but I began to think about the places I wanted to see and what I wanted to do. As the fall progressed, I found myself thinking more and more about Mexico. Christmas passed and Mexico was on the horizon.

A month before the trip I was beginning to buy suntan lotion, think about what clothes I wanted to take and I began going to the tanning salon. For a week before I left, my clothes were neatly piled on a table in my bedroom waiting

to be packed. As you can see, anticipation is a big part of a vacation for me.

What many people don't understand is that when we learn a loved one is dying we begin to grieve the loss even while he or she is still alive.

When you think of it, much of life is spent anticipating events, both happy and sad, that are about to happen. This is true when we learn that someone we love hasn't long to live. What many people don't understand is that when we learn a loved one is dying we begin to grieve the loss even while he or she is still alive. This experience is known as anticipatory grief. In some ways anticipatory grief isn't much different from the grief we experience after the death occurs.

What might you experience during the period of anticipatory grief?

SADNESS. You will experience an intense sadness at the thought of the death of someone you love and that some of your plans will go unfulfilled. You will begin to think about what life will be like after the person is gone.

FRUSTRATED. You may experience some frustration due to your own inability to accept the reality of a pending death. One day you will be in denial. The next, you may become hopeful that it will be your loved one who will beat the illness. Then, reality will set in. "This is me; this is really happening to our family." This ambivalence can be very frustrating.

You may be angry with the doctors for not being able to do anything.

GUILT. It may be there are things that have been said or done between you and the dying person that will make you feel guilty. If you are close to the person, you may feel guilty for not noticing changes in his or her health. You may even feel guilty that you aren't the one who is sick and dying.

ANGER. You may be angry with the doctors for not being able to do anything. You may be angry with the person if the illness is related to a lifestyle that could have been changed. Or you may be angry with God for not intervening in the situation.

LONELINESS. Whenever we are called on to go through a difficult period of life, we often feel we are the only one doing it and that nobody cares or understands. If the illness is prolonged, you may experience loneliness caused by the fact that the person is no longer a part of your everyday life.

FEAR. You are entering unknown territory. This is a place you have never been. You may be afraid of how the disease will run its course. You may be afraid of what the death will actually be like and if you will be there when it happens. You may fear what life will be like after the person has died.

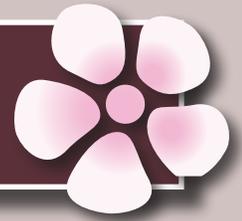
HOPEFUL. It often happens that those who are close to one who is dying find a great well of inner strength. This may be a source of hope that everything will unfold as it is meant to and you will be given the strength you need for each day. You may find strength in your spirituality, your friends and your own life experience. This may be for you one of the greatest periods of growth in your life.

Anticipating the death of someone you love is one of the most painful experiences of life. The days will seem end-

less; you will run out of energy, patience and perhaps hope. At times you will wish it were all over. On the other hand it may be a time during which you and the one who is ill are drawn closer than ever. You may have many hours together to share your memories and your love. These could be the days that will allow you to say, "I have no regrets" when it is all over. If that happens, this will be one of the richest periods of your life.



HELPING YOURSELF THROUGH ANTICIPATORY GRIEF



KEEP COMMUNICATION OPEN between you and the one who is dying and one or two close friends. It is true that talking and feeling brings healing. You need to talk to the one who is dying no matter how difficult it is. Talking with friends gives you a chance to tell them how you are feeling and how they can help.

TAKE STEPS NOW TO REDUCE THE GUILT. A period of anticipatory grief provides you with extra time to say things you have always wanted to say to the one who is dying. It may be an apology, a special thank-you, one more time to say, "I love you," or time to talk about what it will be like after he or she is gone. It may also be a time when you can do some of the things you have always wanted to do together but have put off.

MAKE SURE LEGAL MATTERS HAVE BEEN LOOKED AFTER. Does the one who is dying have a legal will, power of attorney and medical power of attorney?

Having these things in place makes things much easier for the survivors. Pre-planning a funeral is also a good idea. It doesn't make the person die any more quickly and gives both the one who is dying and the family a sense that things are in place.

TAKE TIME TO CARE FOR YOURSELF. This may sound selfish to you, but those who are caring for the dying need to take care of themselves. Draw on the resources of your faith. Take time for exercise. Find a quiet place to reflect, meditate or just listen to your inner voice.

SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP. Your doctor, a clergy person or a bereavement counsellor are three professionals who may be able to help you – or refer you to the person who can. Reach out and get all the help you can.

John Kennedy Saynor is the founder of Genesis Bereavement Resources. He may be reached through his website: www.genesis-resources.com.

Caring for a Grieving Friend



By John Kennedy Saynor

People who are friends of those who are bereaved are often baffled about what they can do or say to help. It is important to remember that everyone responds differ-

ently to the death of a loved one. Similarly everyone has different needs. There are, however, some universal tips that may be helpful to you as you attempt to comfort a grieving friend.

Your presence is very important. Saying, "If I can do anything, please call," isn't enough. Generally a grieving person won't call you. Drop by for coffee in the morning. Invite your friend to join you for lunch.

Encourage the bereaved person to talk about the deceased, their feelings and their concerns. Learn the art of listening. Most grieving people just need to talk about what they are going through.

Don't try to have answers or advice for everything that is said. When your friend asks, "Why did this happen to me?" it is more often a cry of pain than a question expecting an answer.

Be patient. Someone mourning the death of someone close will take months to begin to recover. Most people put on a brave face for the public while inside they are in pain, lonely and full of questions and fear. Give them time and space.

Offer to help with practical matters such as grocery shopping, errands or a drive to the lawyer or doctor. If there are children, offer to take care of them while adults care for some of the post-funeral business.

Make yourself aware of healthy responses to grief. This will ease your anxieties around how well your friend is doing.

Also, become informed about the agencies that are available for bereaved people. Encourage your friend to join a support group or seek someone for one-on-one counselling.

Be aware of physical reactions. If the person isn't feeling well or is over-anxious, many find a visit to the doctor assures them that what they are experiencing is "normal" or healthy.

Remember weekends, evenings and holidays are most difficult. A phone call in the evening, an invitation to dinner on the weekend or special holiday will be appreciated.

Finally, encourage the one who is left to make decisions based on a new reality. Life will never be the same. Life needs to be recreated. Depending on the person and the circumstances surrounding the death, survivors will begin to make these decisions at differing lengths of time following the death. However, it is a universal principle that major decisions like selling the family home, job change, etc. in the first year, are not a good idea.

John Kennedy Saynor is the founder of GENESIS Bereavement Resources. He may be reached through his website: www.genesis-resources.com.

Paradise Row
111 Paradise Row
Saint John, N.B. E2K 3H6
506-634-7424

Brenan's
 **FUNERAL HOMES
& CREMATORIUM**
www.BrenansFH.com

Bay View
1461 Manawagonish Road
West Saint John, N.B. E2M 3X8
506-634-7425