

## GOOD GRIEF

Today's "Health Talk" is not about Charlie Brown. Nor will we focus on how good it is to feel bad. Instead, we will discuss how and why grieving is good for us. **When we lose something or someone we love, we experience grief in waves.** Initially, we experience shock waves because we cannot process the news of our loss. In our attempts to process the loss, we experience waves of denial. Denial helps protect us from feeling the full force of our losses. Since our significant losses impact most areas of our lives, we need some layers of protection as we are beginning to feel our emotions and deal with the reality of our losses.

If you have ever been to the ocean, you will know that waves come and go. Waves can be small, or they can be large and crashing. They can break on you, and at times it feels like the current is pulling you under. When our emotional waves begin, it's very common to feel angry about the loss. In an effort to make sense of the loss, it's easy to get mad and blame something or someone for the loss. But underneath the waves of anger that come and go is a variety of emotions beneath the surface of our lives. Almost anything or any memory of the loss can trigger a host of emotions that come and go. Waves of sadness will come and go whether we like it or not.

**"Good Grief" is what we feel as we express all the emotions we have related to losing someone we love or something we lost.** Grieving is good and healthy because it is God's way of allowing us to feel and express just how much someone or something meant to us. When a loved one dies, good grieving may last one to two years when you are surrounded by caring people who give you all the time you need to talk about your loved one and share your feelings and stories. One of the best things you can do to help grieving people is by encouraging them to share stories and memories that pay tribute and honor to a deceased loved one.

Most people are uncomfortable dealing with death. We cannot figure it out. We don't know what to say or how to feel. But what comforts grieving people the most is not what you know or how you feel or what you say. Our presence with them is what helps them heal. **Our presence alone communicates our care and our love.** We discover our true friends because they don't disappear when we are grieving. True friends give you a shoulder to cry on. True friends lend an ear. True friends make time to be there. True friends also give you space and time alone when it's needed. True friends don't disappear after the funeral is all over. True friends don't always try to fill the air with words. True friends don't always try to make you feel better. True friends will be available to listen, talk, pray, or just do something to get your mind off your loss.

As we are focusing on some of the waves we experience with grieving, you probably remembered someone or something significant in your life that you are losing or that you have lost. So let's take some time to share these feelings and memories.

- **What loss(es) have you experienced that changed your life?**
- **How do you deal with losses and death?**
- **Who do you trust enough to share your feelings of grief?**
- **What do you need from the people around you when you are grieving?**
- **What makes it worse?**

As we allow ourselves to feel and experience "good grieving", in time we will experience some waves of acceptance. We learn to accept the loss and move on. We may make changes or integrate certain aspects of a loved one's character into lives. We may keep something around that allows us to have positive memories of a loved one. We will also know when we've experienced all the waves of good grieving when we can talk about the loss without falling apart.