



## THE TASKS OF MOURNING – SUGGESTED EXERCISES

J. William Worden's book "The Four Tasks of Mourning" describes the path of grief as going through a series of tasks that may be reentered and gone through at any time and any number of times. For each of these tasks, Yolo Hospice Bereavement specialists have offered here a variety of exercises that may be helpful to you in experiencing your grief.

### **Task One: To accept the reality of the loss**

It is normal to remember the days leading up to the death of a loved one, the death itself and the days that followed. Allow yourself time to process through these memories. This helps with adjusting to the reality of the loss. Some of the memories may be troubling to you, pervading your thoughts. If these thoughts continue beyond a tolerable time for you, seek the support of a hospice bereavement specialist, a spiritual care counselor, or a therapist. Working on an immediate memorial of some type may help you now. Consider items such as:

- Condolence cards.
- Letters you received.
- The obituary.
- The program from the funeral or memorial.
- List special words your loved one shared at the end or any memories you might wish to record.

### **Task Two: To experience the pain of grief**

Knowledge is power and can help keep you feeling sane during the more trying experiences of grief. It can also help you know if and when to reach out for help. Read pamphlets, articles, or books on grief to help increase your understanding of natural and normal, as well as, complicated responses to loss. Yolo Hospice has a lending library you can use to better understand the mourning process. Please call us at (800) 491-7711 or (530) 758-5566 to get started reading. You can also try these ideas on your own:

- Wear a favorite clothing item or piece of your loved one's jewelry.
- Carry something of meaning related to his or her life in your wallet or purse.
- Sit in your loved one's favorite chair and rest.
- Tend to your spirit. Seek support from devotional writings, prayers, meditations, poetry, sermons, or hymns.
- Tend to your health. Get outdoors and enjoy nature. Walk or jog and enjoy the beauty that surrounds you.
- Anticipate upcoming special days related to your love one: holidays you enjoyed together, birthdays, anniversaries and other significant days. Instead of worrying, think about how to spend time on that day – with or without family or friends -- by honoring a routine or doing something new.
- Express your feelings in a journal.

**Task Three: Adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing**

Your daily life may have changed radically or slightly with the loss of your loved one. Either way the impact and emptiness left in your life can be something of which you are hyper aware. During this time these ideas may be helpful:

- Join a support group to hear what others in grief are experiencing, and receive support for yourself. Yolo Hospice offers free grief groups.
- Find a trusted friend to talk with about the changes and feelings you are experiencing,
- Keep a simple journal about your journey through grief. Add favorite inspirational quotes or articles to your journal. Date your entries and write freely.
- Select a few items of your loved one's clothing and make or have someone make a comfort quilt, a special pillow, or teddy bear.
- Invite friends or relatives over for an evening meal. Tell stories about the loved one and reminisce.
- Reach out to other bereaved individuals.
- Seek professional help from a hospice bereavement counselor, a spiritual care counselor, or a therapist.

**Task Four: To withdraw emotional energy and reinvest it in another relationship**

In time (the amount of time is different for everyone) you will feel a renewal of your energy and interest in the "outside" world. As this begins to happen, recognize that it is natural. Your loved one still lives in your heart, but it may be time to explore something new:

- Consider volunteering for a cause or organization that inspires you.
- Take a class and learn something new.
- Plan a trip.
- Change your routine a bit.
- Honor your love one's life through giving. Donate to her favorite charity. Start a fund in his memory for a cause that was meaningful to them. Participate in a service project in which your loved one would have participated.
- Establish a lasting memorial such as garden in your yard or a memory book of the love one's life. Include items like photos, postcards, letters, memorabilia of special events and times.

Please call Yolo Hospice, Bereavement Services at (530) 601-5657 or (800) 491-7711 for more information or to discuss the possibility of attending one of our free bereavement groups. You can go on line to [www.yolohospice.org](http://www.yolohospice.org) for more information about grief services and Yolo Hospice.