

COPING WITH LOSS: The Natural Process of Grief



By Ryan Rushing

It is not a matter of who will face grieving in their life, but when. There is not a single person who will not feel the incredible impact that the loss of a loved one causes. According to Dr. Jon Davies of the University Counseling Center, "Just about any time a person changes their life in any way, he or she will experience a loss of one kind or another." In this article I will focus on the loss of an intimate friend or loved one, although the loss of a pet, the end of a relationship, moving away to school, and leaving friends and family behind can bring about heavy feelings of grief.

Often when someone is grieving over the loss of a loved one, friends will avoid

the sensitive subject of the loss. If a song comes on the radio that reminds the survivor of the loss of their loved one, friends will often turn off the radio so that the memories and images of the loved one do not cause the survivor more pain. More times than not, these actions are nothing more than kind-hearted mistakes, because these memories and emotions may be welcomed by the survivor, and can be a valuable part of the healing process.

As a friend of a survivor, it is important to ask her how she is doing, acknowledge her loss, and let her know you are there for her. In doing so, the survivor will recognize that you care and possibly feel not so isolated from the world. Through speaking with friends and Dr. Davies, I have learned that in many cases if you avoid the topic of whatever the survivor is grieving

over, he may feel as though you just do not care about what is happening in his life.

As a friend or family member of a survivor, keep in mind the fact that you have limitations, and you will not be able to help the person who is grieving as much as you would like. Friends and family may be the most valuable support group, but often the survivor may need support from outside this group. For example, if there is a family dispute, the survivor may not feel comfortable talking with them. In addition, a survivor may worry about wearing out their support group of friends. If one person in a close circle of friends experiences a loss, most likely the loss will not only impact the survivor, but also the entire group. Finally, if the survivor is experiencing serious depression or suicidal thoughts, then other forms of support

are necessary.

Dr. Davies points out that for friends of survivors, it is sometimes impossible to understand how long it will take to get through the grieving process. According to Davies, "Grieving is natural and is a process that takes time." This process enables us to grow, however. Davies adds, "Grief is something you grow from, and more times than not, as a result, you become a more compassionate, caring, and understanding person."

The Counseling Center is open five days a week with confidential, drop-in and emergency hours throughout the day. Once a week, group meetings are held for people who are struggling with grief. I was impressed with the knowledge that Dr. Davies displayed and with the friendly, open and caring people who work in the Counseling Center. Call 346-3227 for information.

DISCOVERING MY INNER VOICE



By Jaynel Attolini

It all started when I was nine and tried out for the play "Frosty the Snowman." I practiced relentlessly, singing to anyone that could bear it. My sister clued me in that perhaps I should just be one of the non-talking, non-singing snowballs, but I pressed on.

Auditions came; nothing could shake my confidence. I was going to be the nine year-old, singing snowman wonder. I sang my very best, but much to my horror Sheila Marshalls got the part. What did Sheila have that I didn't? My nine year-old ego was crushed, my big break had been a disaster, and I had to settle for being one of Sheila's peon snowballs.

Needless to say, that was the last time I sang in public. I dreaded Christmas caroling, singing hymns at church and "Happy Birthday." Determined to cage my own voice, I limited myself to late night drives where I would turn up the music full blast and sing to Natalie Merchant and Sarah McLachlan.

To regain the courage to sing, Kim Colosimo and I decided to go see Paula Prober, M.S., who had developed a relaxed atmosphere voice class. In this alternative setting, we focused not on traditional singing, but on getting in touch with our spiritual and emotional voices.

Paula started out the exercise with quieter sounds and a gradual drum beat that got increasingly louder as our sound did also. As we began to discover our sound, random noise filled the room. Everyone had a different sound

to share. At first, I was very apprehensive about my surroundings, but once I relaxed and appreciated this unique experience, I began to find it a safe space for finding my voice and experimenting with sound.

Kim Colosimo had a very positive experience. "I felt as though I was meditating peacefully with different sound being expressed all around me. It was a stress relieving, non-threatening place to be." This cross-cultural, ancient practice of gathering people and making sound is universally recognized as helping people gain self confidence, release emotion, and increase ability to relax.

I discovered through this class that there is a place for people that have inhibitions about singing to go and express themselves through sound. Although no soprano am I, I found that expressing my inner voice was encouraged in this casual setting.

I would urge anyone that struggles with accepting their voice to try Paula's class. Touch your inner voice and spirit and let go of performance anxiety that can prevent you from achieving your sound potential.

"Sound has always been considered a direct link between humanity and the divine. At some point, all of the ancient mystery schools taught their students use of sound as a creative and healing force."

Sacred Sounds—Ted Andrews

Paula Prober, M.S.
358 W. 8th Ave., Eugene, OR, 334-3540
Voice class meetings:

Mondays: 11:35AM-12:35PM
Wednesdays: 9:15AM-10:15AM
Fridays: 5:15PM-6:15PM

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more stressful challenge to the freshman, and these increased feelings of stress can lead to depression.

Dr. Jerome C. Vergamini is a consulting psychiatrist at the Student Health Center who has been treating about a dozen U of O students with SAD each year for ten years. He states that SAD occurs because of changes in the amount of daylight to which people are exposed. When days get shorter, the pineal gland in the brain starts producing melatonin. This increase in the production of melatonin brings about symptoms of SAD.

Surprisingly, Dr. Vergamini states, "The average gloomy Oregon day does produce enough light to suppress melatonin production." Therefore, the real issue that prompts the onset of SAD is decreasing daylight time, not cloudiness.

SAD can be treated with many methods. For example, light treatment involves the use of bright light boxes and it has shown signs of improving conditions of SAD. In fact, eighty-percent of people who use light therapy see an improvement (Rosenthal, 1993). Unfortunately light boxes can be fairly expensive for students to purchase and may not be covered by insurance. As a result, students with SAD are often prescribed anti-depressants for the winter months.

Many less-expensive methods exist to help alleviate symptoms of SAD and even the winter blues. For example, increasing indoor light levels and using bright colors and surfaces in the home can be effective. In addition, growing evidence suggests that regular aerobic exercise has a beneficial effect on mood control in those who suffer from depression in general. Since exercise may mean an increase in exposure to bright light, the anti-depressant effect can be even greater for SAD patients. Stress management can also aid in alleviating the winter blues. For instance, postpone undertaking difficult projects until times of the year when you feel best in order to regulate stress. All of these suggestions can help keep moods more positive in the winter and even year round. However, persons experiencing severe depression symptoms such as loss of appetite, decreasing energy, a lack of interest in activities or trouble with everyday functioning should seek professional help.

Resources

Dr. Vergamini can be reached at the Student Health Center at x6-2751. If you would like further information about Seasonal Affective Disorder, contact Alfred J. Lewy, M.D. Ph.D. or Robert L. Sack, M.D. at the Department of Psychiatry, Oregon Health Sciences University, at (503) 494-5636. The book *Winter Blues* (Guilford Press, 1993) by Norman E. Rosenthal, M.D. is available in the Health Education Room of the Student Health Center.

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Health Resources on Campus

CONFLICT RESOLUTION
U of O Mediation Program
EMU Room 318 346-4240
Office of Student Advocacy
EMU Room 318 346-3722

HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION CONCERNS
Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity
474 Oregon Hall 346-3123
Office of Public Safety Straub Hall 346-5444
Student Conduct Coordinator
364 Oregon Hall 346-1141
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Concerns
346-1142
Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance 346-3360
Sexual Assault Support Services 484-9795

HEALTH CONCERNS
Student Health Center 13th Street at Agate 346-4441
Health Education Program 346-4456
Physical Therapy and Sports Medicine 346-4101
Slocum Sports Medicine Lab 346-4107

Winter Term Workshops for students

- **Weight Management & Body Image**
- **Smoking Cessation**
- **Sleep & Dreams**
- **Low Fat Cooking**
- **Parent Education Series**

Dates to be announced.
Call 346-4456 for more information.