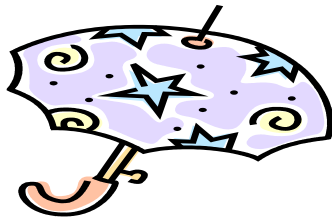


Finding Your Umbrella: Stress Management Strategies for The Bereaved



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BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Marianne Esolen has worked in a wide variety of environments with children and families for over twenty years. She has served as a Camp Counselor, Youth Program Director, Career Coach, Crisis Counselor, Oncology Camp Director, Education Specialist, Trainer and Consultant working with United Way, FECS, American Cancer Society, Camp Happy Times, Camp Hope, Camp Comfort Zone, CASA, Tuesday's Children, & New York State Education Department. In the consulting arena, she has provided technical assistance and customized trainings for camps, schools and agencies in many areas including: leadership, stress management, crisis response, resiliency, peer leadership, parenting, and community-building. As a licensed social worker, Marianne maintains a private practice in Huntington, NY where she works individually with young children, teens, and adults. She specializes in work with issues of grief, chronic illness, and managing life transitions. Above all else, Marianne believes first and foremost in fostering resiliency and promise in people & programs. Dedicated always to learning and teaching best practices, she believes that all that is RIGHT within any person will always be more powerful than any of the challenges they face.

Consulting Services for Agencies, Camps, and Schools

- Customized trainings for staff and volunteers
- Addressing staff wellness & stress management
- Designing youth leadership programs
- Strategic planning in organizational goals and objectives
- Staff challenges - including recruitment, orientation, supervision, and recognition support
- Parent challenges- including communication and policies
- Program Design and evaluation support
- TAMING THE PAPER TIGER - updating policies, manuals, guides, & forms
- Managing change and transition
- Risk management assessment and crisis planning

Customized Professional Workshops on wide variety of topics - for more information and feedback from past attendees please visit my website at www.doallthegood.com

The Mourner's Bill of Rights by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

1. You have the right to experience your own unique grief.

No one else will grieve in exactly the same way you do. So, when you turn to others for help, don't allow them to tell what you should or should not be feeling.

2. You have the right to talk about your grief.

Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk as much as you want, as often as you want, about your grief. If at times you don't feel like talking, you also have the right to be silent.

3. You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions.

Confusion, disorientation, fear, guilt and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief journey. Others may try to tell you that feeling angry, for example, is wrong. Don't take these judgmental responses to heart. Instead, find listeners who will accept your feelings without condition.

4. You have the right to be tolerant of your physical & emotional limits.

Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you feeling fatigued. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. And don't allow others to push you into doing things you don't feel ready to do.

5. You have the right to experience "griefbursts."

Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This can be frightening, but is normal and natural. Find someone who understands and will let you talk it out.

6. You have the right to make use of ritual.

The funeral ritual does more than acknowledge the death of someone loved. It helps provide you with the support of caring people. More importantly, the funeral is a way for you to mourn. If others tell you the funeral or other healing rituals such as these are silly or unnecessary, don't listen.

7. You have the right to embrace your spirituality.

If faith is a part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you feel angry at God, find someone to talk with who won't be critical of your feelings of hurt and abandonment.

8. You have the right to search for meaning.

You may find yourself asking, "Why did he or she die? Why this way? Why now?" Some of your questions may have answers, but some may not. And watch out for the clichéd responses some people may give you. Comments like, "It was God's will" or "Think of what you have to be thankful for" are not helpful and you do not have to accept them.

9. You have the right to right to treasure your memories.

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring your memories, find others with whom you can share them.

10. You have the right to move toward your grief and heal.

Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself and avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you. Neither you nor those around you must forget that the death of someone loved changes your life forever

Words of Wisdom

"Shared joy is double joy, and shared sorrow is half sorrow."

"Chaos demands to be recognized and experienced before letting itself be converted into a new order."

"Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."

"In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer."

"There is no such thing as a problem without a gift for you in its hands."

"Experience is not what happens to you, it is what you do with what happens to you."

"The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing that you will make one."

"It is only possible to live happily ever after on a day-to-day basis."

"The world is round and the place that may seem like the end may also be only the beginning."

Tips For Taking Care of Self

1. **WALK** - Walking feels good and is good for you - burning 5 calories per minute! Walk consciously and slowly heel to toe and enjoy the sights, sounds, and air around you. Park in spaces further away to add extra walking into each day's errands.
2. **BREATHE** - When we are stressed our breathing becomes more shallow and this also makes concentration more difficult. Take several deep breaths and imagine inhaling positive healing energy and exhaling frustrated and negative energy.
3. **TUNE OUT** - Turn off your cell phone or beeper and take a break from the answering machine too. Give yourself permission to be unreachable for a window of time each day. Same with email - set a time to catch up and let go of the pressure.
4. **FREE TIME** - Change the "wasted" time spent waiting in line, being on hold and sitting in traffic into an opportunity to take a mini-vacation and revisit a favorite memory or envision an upcoming occasion.
5. **BE ALONE** - Spend at least a few minutes of time each day ALONE free from the demands of family, friends, and colleagues. If you need to steal this time by hiding out in the bathroom!
6. **LAUGH** - Humor is good medicine physically, spiritually, and mentally. Seek out opportunities to smile and laugh a little or better yet A LOT every day. Create a first-aid laugh kit with favorite comic strips and silly stories.
7. **BEAUTY** - Enjoy the natural beauty in the world around you. Check out the trees, animals, flowers, and a favorite painting that you have, but forget to enjoy.
8. **TOUCHSTONES** - Surround yourself by personal touchstones of all the things that you value the most - photos of family, quotes you live by, a sea shell from vacation, a child's art work - reminders of your life outside of your work.
9. **JUST SAY YES** - Embrace opportunities to take care of yourself and celebrate living. Say YES to an invitation for lunch, a trip with friends, and the offer of assistance from a colleague. And say YES to setting limits on pressures and projects pushed your way.
10. **SMALL GOOD THINGS LIST** - Create a list of the simple things that make you happy or renew your spirit when you are low. Keep supplies, if necessary, available so you can always tap into these pick-me-up treats. Some favorites may include old movies, comics, bubble baths, candles, licorice, magazines, crossword puzzles, watercolor paints, and home movies.

INSTANT STRESS RELIEVERS

Today's world produces plenty of stress. Life's little hassles mount up until you say to yourself, "if one more thing goes wrong today, I'll explode!" At times when the pressure seems to be too much and you can't concentrate anymore, don't just reach for the Advil. Instead try one of these quick stress relievers.

❖ TAKE SIX DEEP BREATHS

Breathe in deeply through your nose, and slowly exhale through your mouth. Put your hands on your abdomen and notice how it rises and falls. Take your time, try to inhale over 5 seconds and exhale for 5-10 seconds. Focus on nothing else - just the experience of breathing.

❖ VISIT HAWAII, BAHAMAS, OR FLORIDA KEYS

If these places aren't special to you, pick another setting that you see as beautiful and peaceful. Stimulate your other senses too. Imagine the smell of the salt air. Feel the warmth of the sun on your skin. Hear the rhythm of the crashing waves. Taste the salty ocean water. In a matter of minutes you'll recapture the actual pleasure of being there.

❖ STRRRRETCHHHH

Stand up and let your arms fall loosely at your side. Give them a little shake to loosen up and then raise them high over your head and go up on your toes. Stretch to the right and hold for five seconds. Stretch to the left and hold for five seconds. Repeat several times.

❖ HUG SOMEONE

Physical connection can be a great stress reducer. Four hugs a day will do a lot to calm you down. Be generous giving and receiving hugs. Hug your spouse or partner. Hug a friend. Hug the kids. Hug a neighbor. Hug a colleague. Hug your dog. Cuddle with your cat.

❖ CHANGE THE SCENE

Sometimes a change of scenery is all it takes to decompress and relax. Walk to a window and watch the birds or squirrels. Walk to a classroom, the gym, or the playground and watch the children. Take a leisurely stroll on the outside grounds. Go outside for five minutes and breathe deeply.

❖ FIND A FRIEND

Choose a kind and patient soul, someone who doesn't give advice or mind listening. Find someone who can just BE there and listen actively to your concerns and complaints.

❖ TAKE AN EXERCISE BREAK

Take a brisk walk at any point during the day. Climb an extra flight of stairs and walk to a colleague's office or a nearby deli for lunch. When your mind is cluttered, move your body. Exercise will boost your energy and improve your frame of mind.

❖ HAVE A GOOD LAUGH

Pull a joke book out of your drawer and take a reading break. Post a funny calendar. Visit a co-worker who is known for a fine sense of humor. Or just remember a funny event and LAUGH. Your spirits will rise immediately.

❖ GET A FRESH OUTLOOK

Stress often comes from taking yourself and your job too seriously. Lighten the load by asking and answering the question, "what's the worst thing that could happen if . . . I make a mistake?" Actual consequences are usually not nearly as bad as what we imagine.

❖ FINISH SOMETHING

There's a great sense of achievement when you complete a task. Most of us are bogged down by lengthy and complex projects. Give yourself a quick sense of accomplishment by selecting an easy task that can be done in ten minutes. Then just do it.

❖ PLAY

A few minutes spent playing brings renewed energy and concentration to the job. Use your break time to work a crossword puzzle or play a computer game. Blow bubbles, handle a slinky, or color a picture.

As your mind gets busy with these kinds of thoughts, you'll find that your stress will begin to fade away. Breaks and activities don't need to be long or complicated to make a difference in your mood and stress level. In a matter of minutes, you'll be able to work with new vitality.

Adapted from Practical Supervision