



The Bereavement Caregiver's Self-Care Manifesto

By Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD

1. I deserve to lead a joyful, whole life.
2. My work with bereaved people does not define me.
3. I am not the only one who can help bereaved people.
4. I must develop healthy eating, sleeping and exercising patterns.
5. If I've been over-involved in my caregiving for too long, I may have forgotten how to take care of myself.
6. I must maintain boundaries in my helping relationships.
7. I am not perfect and I must not expect myself to be.
8. I must practice effective time-management skills.
9. I must also practice setting limits and alleviating stresses.
10. I must listen to my inner voice.
11. I should express the personal me in both my work and play.
12. I am a spiritual being. I must spend alone time focusing on self-understanding and self-love.

When Crisis Has Changed Your Life

By James E. Miller

Sometime life hurts us.

Sometimes it robs us of something, or someone very dear.

Sometimes it causes us pain,

 a pain we did not choose and do not want.

Sometime life severely restricts us.

When that happens, we feel out of control.

We may be tempted even to question the meaning of our lives,

 asking, "Why me?", "Why mine?", "Why this?", "Why now?"

A future we had taken for granted will not come to be.

Plans, carefully drawn up, will not lead where we expected.

We find ourselves face-to-face with life circumstances

 not of our liking.

A life, in short, we don't quite know how to live.

We wonder: how do we go on?

Where is the meaning?

And how do we re-design our lives when the future that is

 before us is so different from the one we've foreseen?

What must happen first is quite clear, quite natural---

 and perhaps quite overwhelming.

We will have many of them.

There may be anger, even outrage.

There may be fear, even terror.

There may be sadness or despair.

There may be feelings of guilt.

Our feelings matter, whatever they are.

And however we feel, it will help to give our feelings words.

 eitherspoken or written,

 either full-throated or whispered.

And we may need to do this, not once, but many times,

 As our feelings ebb and flow over the course of days, weeks, months.

We may surprise ourselves with the strength of our feelings,

 but that is okay, and even good.

For the presence of strong feelings today is a good prediction that

 we'll have strong ones tomorrow as well.

Tomorrow, when we'll feel something different,

 and more encouraging.

So this is our first fragile step: to release our feelings,

 So that eventually they will release us.

When You Feel Sad

by James E. Miller

Sadness is often a part of grief---
that cannot be denied.
Your sadness is real,
yet it need not be final.
You have known deep joy before;
you can yet again.
And while your despair brings you pain,
it can also bring you wisdom and strength.
From it you can learn secrets about yourself,
and truths about others.
Through it you can experience the blessings of healing,
and the mysteries of life.
So listen to your despair
and allow it to lead you to greater fullness.
And always remember; you are not alone.
You are loved, whatever happens.
You have significance, whatever befalls.
For you are an unrepeatable act in God's grand creation.
You are irreplaceable.
At this moment, your journey in life
is requiring of you great courage,
often unseen by others.
Be strong in your persistence.
Be supple in your patience.
And know: despite your brokenness,
and somehow even because of it,
wholeness awaits you.
Despite what you have lost,
and somehow even because of it,
you stand to gain.
You hold the possibility of experiencing life
with maturity, and a compassion, and an appreciation
you have never known before.
So be open.

Know that the life which flows, through you
has been given you as a sacred gift.

Cherish that gift.

Nurture it.

Above all else, hallow the preciousness
of each passing moment that is yours,
for this is where the miracle of life resides,
and this is where you must go to find it.

Finally, remember that your destiny was predicted
by the writer of the Book of Job:

“You will forget your misery,
you will remember it as waters that have passed away.

And your life will be brighter than the noonday;
its darkness will be like the morning.

And you will have confidence,
because there is hope.”