



Sound Waves



“The soul would have no rainbow had the eyes no tears.”

– John Vance Cheney

In This Issue

- 1 Understanding crying
- 2 Parenting through the tears
- 3 SoundCareKids
- 5 Adult support groups

Understanding crying

At a support group one evening, a participant talked about suddenly beginning to cry at the meat counter in the grocery store. It was unexpected and she felt embarrassed. Another participant chimed in, “It happened to me, too. All that set me off was someone asking how I was while I was checking out at the store.” “And me, too,” said another member, “all it took was pumping gas for myself.” After a half hour of story-telling, group members agreed that it must be a normal response to grieving the loss of a loved one; but that didn’t make it any easier, especially when it was unexpected.

Crying is not most people’s favorite expression of emotion. In public we feel exposed and vulnerable. In private we worry we may not be able to stop crying. Yet crying is a normal response to grief and loss, and what triggers it may be surprising. After talking it through, the person who started crying at the meat counter realized she had suddenly recognized how different her life was without her husband. Softness and caring had made sad feelings surface for the second participant when he was asked how he was doing. And the third woman had seldom had to pump her own gas – her husband had played that role while she did other tasks in their relationship. She became aware that now she would be playing both roles.

As emotional beings, we humans have developed some negative and often unrealistic reactions to the expression of those emotions. Possibly the most misunderstood and maligned of these expressions is crying. However, if we understand something about the purpose of tears, our anxiety about this may decrease as we come to accept and appreciate this very natural and healing human response.

Continued on page 4

Parenting through the tears

Seeing another person cry is difficult for us as human beings. Our distress at another person's emotional pain combined with our uncertainty regarding how best to respond often leaves us uncomfortable internally. However as adults we have developed skills that help us to comfort ourselves and others in these situations. We know that we can have a good cry and will feel better as a result, even if the relief is only temporary. We know that our tears won't last forever, even if only because the exhaustion that results from intense crying causes us to fall asleep. We have also learned what helps us recover – whether it be physical activity, creative expression, a warm bath, a long drive or a favorite song. And we have likely developed at least one close relationship with someone to whom we can express our deepest feelings and from whom we can receive genuine love and support. We also know, even though we may forget at times, that we can best support a distressed friend by simply listening and validating without judgment the feelings that person expresses. We realize that it is that person's responsibility to prioritize self-care, and that his or her failure to do so will not jeopardize our own survival.

Young children do not have the same perspective. Their life experience is obviously much more limited, so they haven't developed as large a repertoire of skills for managing their own distress or responding to the distress of others. They are less able to see the "big picture." They rely on the reactions of the adults around them as a gauge for measuring the severity of the events that impact them and the appropriate emotional response. And

they are still very dependent on those same adults for getting their physical and emotional needs met. Due to this power differential and their lack of cognitive and emotional maturity, children are often terrified by the possible implications of a caregiver's emotional distress as well as by their own resultant sense of helplessness. Imagine how overwhelming it must be for them to witness a caregiver's tears! Children respond to situations and express their feelings behaviorally, and these behavioral responses can be as varied as the children themselves. Some may attempt to distract the adult from difficult emotions by being silly or cute or naughty. Others may attempt to become as independent as possible so as to avoid further burdening the caregiver. Many will become much clingier, afraid of losing their connection to another caregiver, even if only emotionally.

Although your child may never feel completely comfortable with your tears, your honest expression of your feelings is important. Seeing you cry can provide your child with a valuable opportunity to develop greater empathy and to learn some critical emotion-regulation skills in addition to showing your child that sadness and tears are a normal part of the human emotional experience. There are a number of ways that you can support your child through this learning process.

1. Give your tears a voice

Use words to explain to your child why you are crying. This takes the mystery out of the situation and with it some of the scariness. Crying can be an expression of many different emotions such as anger, helplessness, and sadness; so this also gives your child the correct emotional label for your behavior. It may also be helpful to remind your child that your sadness will not keep you from caring for him or her, that your tears will not last forever and that crying actually helps you feel better if that is the case.

2. Give your child optional responses

Telling your child what is comforting to you when you are sad empowers your child to take an active role in providing age-appropriate emotional support. If your child watches you with a worried expression when you cry, you can provide him or her with options such as giving you a tissue, a glass of water or a hug.

3. Give yourself meltdown time

Although crying in front of your children is a way of modeling normal expression of feelings, your child needs to feel secure in the knowledge that you are still competent and in control, and that you can still take care of him or her. Falling apart in front of your child doesn't convey that message; and yet grief needs moments of unbridled

Continued on page 3

expression. So take opportunities to do your own grieving with the support of other adults. Let trusted friends or family care for your child while you attend your own grief support group, visit the gravesite or other special location, spend some time with a supportive friend, or sit in your car and sob for awhile. Fully expressing your feelings in these safe, appropriate settings will help you grieve in front of your child in a way that is less intense and thus less likely to overwhelm him or her.

4. Give all of your feelings

expression Communicating to your child your happiness, disappointment, anger, excitement, pride, confusion and other emotions helps your child to see your sadness in context: as one of the many feelings that are a wonder-

ful part of the experience of living. This also helps the child develop a vocabulary related to emotions that can begin to supplement his or her behavioral expression of feelings.

5. Give your child's tears equal

treatment Allow your child to express sadness in the way that is natural for him or her. Regardless of the form that expression takes, be it tears or otherwise, reflect to your child the behavior that you observe and the emotions you believe he or she is

experiencing. For example, "I see that you are crying. Are you feeling sad?" Allow your child to tell you what he or she is experiencing without correcting him or her. Even though it is painful to see your child in distress, don't try to talk your child out of his or her feelings or offer false reassurances. Ask what your child needs at that moment and honor the request. Your help in your child's development of appropriate ways of releasing his or her feelings is critical.

Recommended Readings

For Children: "The Boy Who Didn't Want to Be Sad" by Rob Goldblatt
"Tough Boris" by Kathryn Brown

For Teens: "Fire In My Heart, Ice In My Veins" by Enid Samuel-Traisman

For Caregivers: "The Journey Through Grief and Loss: Helping Yourself and Your Child When Grief is Shared" by Robert Zucker

SoundCare Kids

Grief support for children, teens and the adults who care for them.

Group nights begin with pizza and play. The kids, teens and caregivers then meet in small groups for discussion and activities designed to explore different aspects of grief. Each week builds on the concepts, discussions and activities of the previous week, so attending all six weeks is recommended.

Our regular session topics include:

Week 1: Learning about grief and getting to know each other

Week 2: Exploring feelings and learning how to cope with them

Week 3: Sharing our stories

Week 4: Dealing with regret, guilt and unfinished business

Week 5: Identifying and adjusting to changes

Week 6: Keeping memories and staying connected

SoundCareKids is provided at no cost to families in Thurston, Lewis and Mason counties through funding from Providence St. Peter Foundation.

For more information about counseling or to reserve your place in an upcoming session, call Providence SoundHomeCare and Hospice at 360-493-5928. Pre-registration is required.

2015 Winter Grief Support Group Schedule

The 2015 Winter Grief Support Group will meet 6:15-7:45 p.m., Thursdays, Jan. 29-March 5.



<http://on.fb.me/ikYfdd>

Understanding crying

Continued from page 1

Crying can play an important part in understanding the loss. Certain triggers may cause tears and sadness for some time to come. Talking it through at a support group or with an understanding friend may give understanding and an opportunity for healing. Crying is a physically beneficial response to sadness. Tears contain ACTH, a stress hormone, and leucine-enkephalin, an endorphin that modulates pain. Crying has the effect of balancing the stress hormones in the body. In a study, 85 percent of women and 73 percent of men reported feeling better after crying.

Crying may prolong life. Research has shown an association between tears and attitudes about crying and various stress-related illnesses and even longevity. People suffering from ulcers and colitis, two conditions aggravated by stress, were found less likely to have positive attitudes about crying and tears. One study found that widows with understanding acquaintances who made it easier for them to cry and express their feelings were healthier than widows who experienced less encouragement from others to weep and discuss their feelings of grief.

The renowned psychiatrist, Karl Menninger, M.D. wrote in his book, "The Vital Balance", "Weeping is perhaps the most human and most universal of all relief measures."

Crying means that we have deeply cared about someone or something. This makes crying a normal, natural and positive response to our love. It can be a very positive outlet for emotions that are hard for our minds, hearts and bodies to bear.

Albert Richard Smith wrote, "Tears are the safety valves of the heart when too much is laid upon it." Losing loved ones is too much for the heart sometimes, and the safety valve of weeping saves us from having to make other organs weep. Give thanks for the tears, the "healing waters," and let them flow.

A short poem by Donald Wayne Rash summarizes tears and crying as follows:

"Tears on the outside fall to the ground...and are slowly swept away. Tears on the inside fall on the heart, and stay...and stay...and stay."

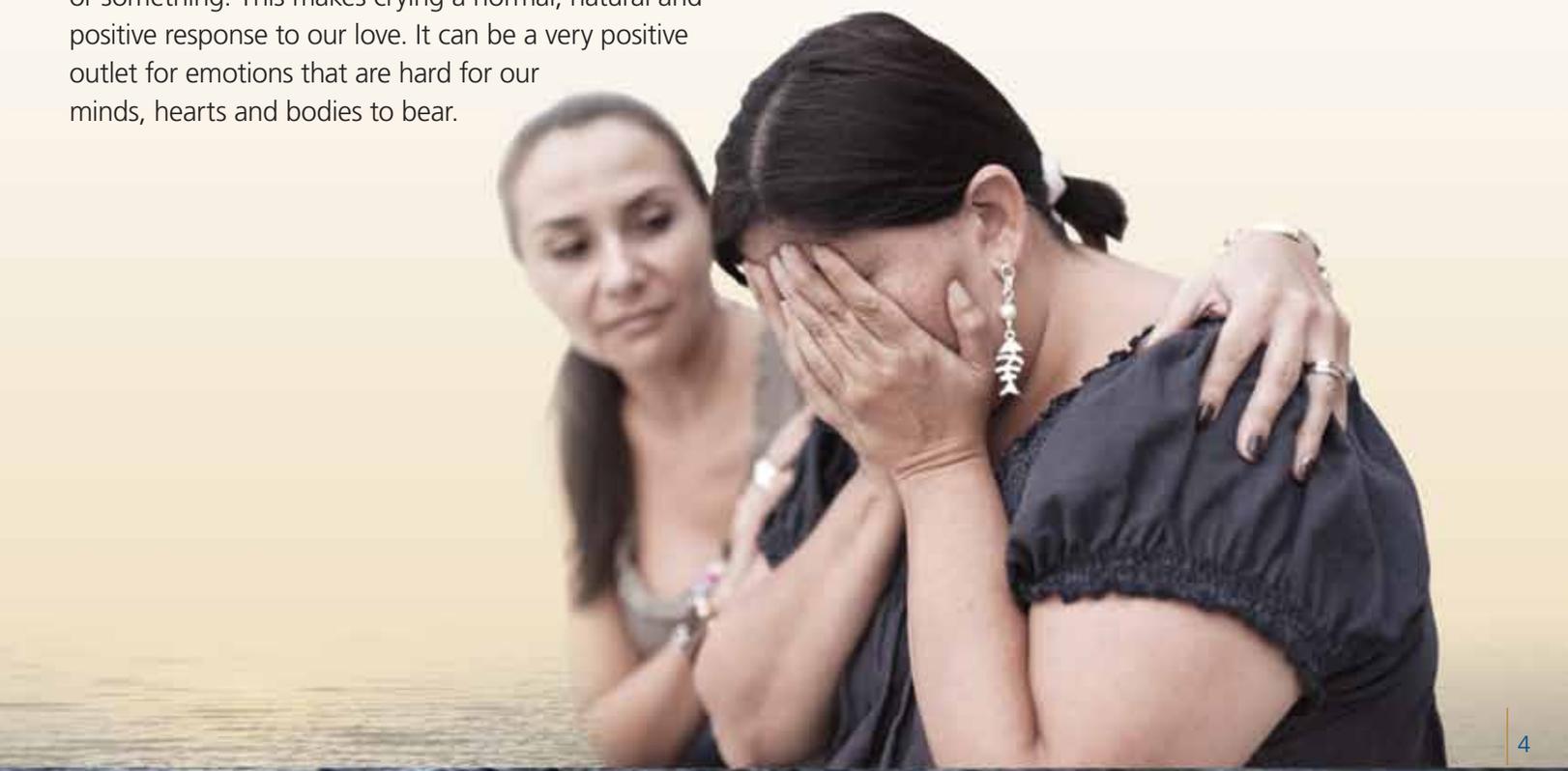
We don't want the tears to fall on the inside, making us sick and depressed. We want, over time, to be healed. It is difficult to change attitudes about something we have long held to be negative. Yet, crying is a beneficial and healthy response to the loss of something or someone we hold dear.

www.uthealthleader.org/sheddingtears

Recommended Readings

"The Crying Handbook" by Bob Baugher, Ph.D. and Darcie Sims, Ph.D.

"Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing your Heart" by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.



Adult support groups

Everyone has the capacity to heal and grow after the life-altering experience of a major loss. Our goal is to help people understand and cope with their grief while offering support and opportunities to learn and grow. We help people identify needs and strengths and work with them to develop a plan to address these. We work with individuals, families and groups in the community.

For information about individual counseling or to make an appointment, call 360-493-4667.



Adult Support Groups (Ongoing)

Daytime

- 10-11:30 a.m.
first and third Monday of each month
Lacey Presbyterian Church
3045 Carpenter Road SE, Lacey
Information: 360-493-4667
- 1:30-3 p.m.
first and third Tuesday of each month
Shelton Health and Rehabilitation Center
153 Johns Court, Shelton
Information: 360-493-4667

Evening

- A Mindful Approach to Grief (6-week series)
This grief support group will meet for six consecutive weeks to explore how the concept of mindfulness can be an important tool in coping with grief.

6-7:30 p.m.
Tuesdays, Feb. 24-March 31
Providence SoundHomeCare and Hospice
3432 South Bay Road NE, Olympia
Free. Pre-registration is required.
For more information or to register, call 360-493-4667.
- Loss of Child Support Group
(The Compassionate Friends)

7-8:30 p.m.
first Monday of each month
Providence St. Peter Hospital (Executive Mtg. Room)
413 Lilly Road NE, Olympia
Information: Allen Roth at 360-402-6711

Providence SoundHomeCare and Hospice

3432 South Bay Road NE

Olympia, WA 98506

www.providence.org/pshch

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Grief support for all ages

Providence SoundHomeCare and Hospice provides a full range of grief support and bereavement services for adults and children. We can help you better understand and cope with your grief, while offering support and opportunities to learn and grow.

See **INSIDE** for more information!

Grief comes with a ladder

– Richard Solly (for Kay)

*Friend, you ask when it will end.
All I know is that grief comes with a ladder,
though not for ascending. Try to decipher
the language of leaves, other faces, as strange
as they appear. Its alphabet will not make sense.
Nothing, not even birds, exists now as they should.
Never mind them. Their songs belong elsewhere.
Your task is clear. Climb, one hand, one foot,
one after another takes you there. You ask:
Do words help? Remember. The truest prayer
is said before you utter its words. Like the wind
stirs the feather of a still bird. The words
themselves that lift into the air don't matter,
only the silence and sky that summon you.
I know only this: as you reach the last rung,
as your clothes become threadbare, as hope
becomes a whisper, a reversal happens.
Like water, when it's displaced by weight,
rises, and is now overflowing the brim.
What took you down now takes you up
One morning, a sign of change:
shade under the leaves of a small tree.*