Little acts of courage

For those who are grieving, the challenges of simply living through each day can at times feel overwhelming. You may find that difficult choices or decisions and strong emotional responses combine to create a world that seems almost impossible to navigate. In those moments it might be worthwhile to remember the little acts of courage that you perform every day. And while the virtue of courage is more often associated with overcoming formidable obstacles or placing oneself in physical peril, those little acts of courage you perform are no less remarkable.

The Courage to Get Out of Bed. With the coming of each new day you are presented with the choice of being courageous. Moving from the bed and out into the world without your loved one might seem daunting. Placing one foot in front of the other may seem all but impossible to accomplish. To acknowledge and recognize the courage that is sometimes needed to begin the day is the first step in honoring all that you do for yourself at this challenging time.

The Courage to Live a New “Normal.” With the death of a loved one, the old sense of normal ceases to exist. That sense of safety that you may have felt in the “known,” can disappear as each day you are faced with discovering your new normal. It is a day-to-day discovery that requires patience with yourself and the many, many feelings you may be experiencing as well as the choices and decisions with which you may be faced.

The Courage to Reach Out and Teach. It takes courage to honestly look at yourself, identify what you need, and to let others know what those needs are. Because grief is so unique to the individual experiencing it, the specifics of what you need may not be apparent to those who most want to provide it. As you reach out and teach those who are able to provide support to you, you are creating an environment for yourself that provides a safe place for you to experience your grief.

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Little acts of courage (continued)

The Courage to Create a New Future. As anniversaries and special days come throughout the year, you will be reminded of the dreams and goals that you may have shared with your loved one. It may be that you will need to release some of these dreams in the hopes of creating new dreams and goals for yourself in a world forever changed. It truly takes courage to not only relinquish a dream, but to create a new one that might stand in its place.

The Courage to Be in the Moment. When a wave of grief crashes around you, sometimes the greatest act of courage you can perform is to simply remain in the moment. As you do so, the intensity of the wave will slowly subside and you will have moved one step further down your pathway of grief. Life can only be lived in the moment and grief reminds us of that truth many times each day.

These five acts of courage are only a few examples of the many courageous acts you may be quietly performing throughout each day. Tracing the roots of the word courage leads you to the Latin cor or heart. Each day as you perform the deep heart work that is grief, may you often be reminded that some of the smallest moments of day-to-day living require some of the greatest amounts of courage.

Supporting your child:
Activities that affirm a grieving child’s strengths

A primary goal of the children’s grief support program, through the groups and events we offer, is to create an environment which invites children to safely experience their own unique grief process. Affirming the tremendous courage it takes for grieving children to participate in these offerings is inherent to the program.

Camp Erin is the annual weekend bereavement camp for children and teens held in King and Snohomish counties. Previous activities included a medieval-themed treasure hunt, incorporating the concept of the “armor” children adorn when facing the challenges of everyday life after a loved one has died. The obstacle course, Camelot Castle, is a favorite of all kids. The purpose of this activity is to mirror many facets of the grief process: there is a maze to navigate, a climbing wall without grips for hands or feet, a balance beam hovering over an “alligator-filled” moat, and a community-building experience which involves team cooperation. These, or other activities offered at camp, provide the opportunity for kids to recognize difficult feelings, identify their support network, clarify their strengths, accept support and have fun.

Each of these offerings utilizes the model of honoring the inherent strengths present in each child. Parents and guardians can similarly affirm the “little acts of courage” witnessed in their child’s everyday life by acknowledging their hard work.