Being Alone vs. Being Involved

At times after the death, you may have a desire to limit your interactions with people. Yet at other times, you may feel a desperate need to be with others. These issues are especially important if you have children living at home who misinterpret your desire to be alone as rejection. For a time after the death, you may want to talk about your grief only with people who have had an identical loss.

For example, one woman wanted at first to talk only to bereaved people who, like herself, lost a 20 year old son. Later, she extended herself to bereaved parents who lost children of other ages.

Suggestions:

When you do interact with others, neither surround yourself exclusively with people in grief, nor with nonbereaved individuals.

If you experience a desire to be alone, tell other people (especially children) that you need some "space." Go somewhere by yourself and have a good, long cry.

Don't keep your grief to yourself just because you don't want to "trouble" anyone. When you want to be touched, held, or hugged, tell people. Remember, if your friends were in your predicament, you would want to help them. They probably feel the same way. Taking the risk of being rejected by another person is difficult, especially if you have been rejected recently. The alternative is to be left alone with your grief. Please continue to reach out, despite your setbacks. You deserve to be helped at a time like this. Someday you may be able to return the favor.

Make a list of possible support people. Some people can help you by just "being there" to give you emotional support – such as being a good listener. Other people can better help you by doing things for you, such as repairs, errands and favors.

Bereavement support groups can be very helpful. Other people feel that they would do better to work on their grief without group involvement.

Do I want to find out more about grief from other people? Do I have a desire to listen to the grief experiences and coping strategies of other people? Am I ready to tell my story?

Source: A Guide for the Bereaved Survivor by Robert Baugher, Ph.D. & Marc Calija