

A Safe Place to Share

Grief is around us all year long, but the holiday season can be even more difficult to get through when the whole world is trying to be joyous and carefree. It is not only during the holidays when people are trying to cheer up those who are in grief, most of us do our best to avoid grief all together. We treat death like something to avoid when it is a fact no one gets out of this world alive. We all die, it is just the truth of being human.

Yet we are all uncomfortable when it comes to death, our own or anyone else's. We don't know what to say when we see someone who has lost a loved one. We offer trite words, that truth be told, can be more hurtful than helpful. Our culture has managed to take something so prominent in our world and brush it off as if it doesn't exist at all.

But it does exist and we can't pretend it doesn't. The problem with ignoring a loss is those who are experiencing the grief feel they are doing something wrong. They think they should "get over it", and just tuck away their feelings and pretend they are fine. However, those feelings don't just go away with sheer will and if the many feelings of grief are crammed down deep inside, one day, like a Jack-in-the-Box, they will spring up when least expected and bring more pain.

My name is Pastor Tammy Craker. I am the pastor at Plentywood Lutheran Church. When I moved to Plentywood it was the obvious to me this community had its fair share of grief. Being of strong stock, Montana people seem to want to stuff their feelings down too. Some find ways to avoid the pain and sadness in self-deprecating ways such as over use of drugs, alcohol, eating disorders, hoarding, separating from loved ones, and risk-taking behaviors of all sorts.

But what is the best way to deal with grief? That was my question. As a person of faith, I do believe death is not the end of our lives. But that doesn't make losing someone you love any easier. Over the last year I took a class in coaching people through the end of their lives as well as those who are grieving. As a coach I am not a therapist. I don't have a psychology degree, but as a coach I will listen deeply and ask thought provoking questions to help you deal with your feelings of grief and help you imagine how to live your life without that special someone.

This summer I offered my first grief class, open to the public and this fall I offered a second grief class, both held at and sponsored by Sheridan Memorial Hospital in Plentywood. I am hoping to expand the classes and offer a variety of different groups based on types of loss such as loss by tragedy, suicide, or miscarriage just to name a few. I am also available for one-on-one coaching to help people begin to live their new life after loss.

There is no shame in getting help as you maneuver through a whole new world you never asked for and never imagined. If you need to talk through your grief, even if it's been years and years, I would be happy to talk with you and see what would be most helpful for you.

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