

## Grief Services

### What Makes Group Support Work

1. Instillation of hope \*
  - Seeing others farther along in the grief process
  - Receiving encouragement from other group members, leaders
  - Leaders "*hold the hope*" for participants who feel hopeless
2. Universality ("*I am not alone*") \*
  - We all have similar problems, experiences, "*we're in the same boat* "
3. Learning new information
  - Grief education (e.g. normalizing grief reactions, anticipating anniversary reactions)
4. Altruism (receiving through giving)
  - Increased self-esteem
  - Decreased self-absorption
  - Healing value of being able to support others when you feel like you have nothing to offer
5. Cohesion ("we-ness") \*
  - Sense of group solidarity, identifying with the group
  - Cohesion is necessary for the group to work and for other healing factors to take place
6. Catharsis/emotional release \*
  - Experiencing one's inner feelings, then expressing/sharing them with others and being *accepted*
  - 1<sup>st</sup> task of grief is to experience the pain (William Worden)
7. Existential/spiritual factors
  - Taking responsibility for your own life, feelings, behavior
  - Grief as an opportunity for existential/spiritual growth
  - Realizing that despite interpersonal support, you are ultimately alone in this and your healing is ultimately up to you
  - Through hearing others' experiences, finding freedom in the awareness that life is not always fair—for anyone. You, alone, have not necessarily been singled out.

## Hospice of Petaluma

## Memorial Hospice

### 8. Imitative behavior/role modeling

- Learning coping skills through observing/hearing how others cope
- Looking to group members who are further along in the grief process who can model the possibility of healing
- Looking at group members who are new to the grief process to see how far you've come

### 9. Receiving feedback

- Constructive feedback from leaders and other group members can reinforce the progress a group member has trouble acknowledging
- Normalizing grief reactions
- Careful, constructive feedback from leaders and other group members can point out where a group member may be coping in self-destructive ways
- Interpersonal feedback is especially important in therapy groups where the focus is more on changing behavior patterns.

### 10. Social contacts

- Developing supportive social connections with others
- These can be developed further outside the group between interested group members.