



Making Space to Explore the Mystery of Grief, Loss, Death and Dying, and the New Normal

*"Surely he has borne our griefs and
carried our sorrows." Isaiah 53:4*

Love and suffering are the threads of fabric that unite our human experience. We grieve, as deeply as we love. Unlike love, grief is a turbulent ocean of uninvited feelings and overwhelming emotions that shatter the heart; changing life, forever. I wish I could say making space to explore the depths of grief, loss, death and dying, and the new normal is easy, or a painless process. I can say, it is a necessity. We need to make the space and give ourselves permission to grieve. It is normal and natural.

What I have come to learn through my own personal life experiences and during 13 years in ministry journeying with those afflicted, sick and dying is this: *expressed grief - is courageous love in action*. It is the legacy of experiential shared love in all forms. We are always grieving on some level or another. Time on its own has nothing to do with it. Rather, time is the space in which we choose to explore, or not, the mysteries that await us in our grief, moment to moment.

What changes? Hope, resilience, and felt-knowing. They are co-authors on our faith journey. As we develop new found awareness, understanding, acceptance, friendships, and the inner freedom to be exactly where we are, we come to the realization that we were never truly alone. A life forever changed...a heart...once shattered becomes transformed in the enfolding mystery of God's healing power of love.

- Jo-Andrew, *A Bridge to Eternity*

Logistics: The 4 week workshop takes place every Thursday from January 25th - February 15th. 1/25, 2/1, 2/8, & 2/15.

Location: Our Lady of Grace Spiritual Center

Time: 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Workshop Overview: Grief is the natural response expression to loss, change, death and dying. There are no right or wrong ways to grieve. Grief takes us to unknown places that are revealed on a long arduous journey. Making space to explore the mystery of God's Grace where you are, is the gift and focus of the workshop. Navigating through grief, loss, death, dying, and the new normal, opens many pathways dimensions, and dynamics. As well as resting places, shapes, and forms. Each person is unique, and therefore, has their own *Grief Expression*.

Workshop Focus:

- Increased awareness, understanding and insights of the grieving process, definitions, grief expressions, and compounded grief
- To recognize and embrace inner feelings, emotions, and sensations, of grief, loss, change, death and dying
- Explore the mystery of God's infinite love
- Find your own pathway as you come to normalize your personal experience

Participants will have the opportunity to:

- Pray and Reflect
- Share heart felt experiences in a confidential, sacred space
- Identify feelings, emotions, triggers, and actions
- Learn their own unique *Grief Expression* and coping strategies
- Build bonds with others who know what you are going through
- Find new thresholds of inner strength and hope
- Discover creative ways to live in the here and now
- Join a support/bereavement group

Each topic is built upon the other through: prayer, reflection/meditation, presentation materials, handouts, journaling, sharing moments and story telling.

Week One-Grief: Psalm 34:18 - "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."

Invitation: Finding God in the mist of suffering and pain.

Topics Include-definitions of grief, effects of grief, grief triggers, grief expressions, coping skills, and healing. Discovering your own *Grief Expression*.

Week Two-Loss: Proverbs 3:5 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding."

Invitation: You may feel lost and confused during these painful moments. God knows your loss and waits to shower you with love.

Topics Include-grief defined by identifiable loss, loss experiences, coping with change, reflection on loss and the sense of normalcy, finding hope and resilience.

Week Three-Death and the Dying: Romans 8:38-39- "I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height or depth, or any other thing that is created."

Invitation: Death is but a gateway to our loving God who waits with open arms at the door step of eternity. Contemplative, sitting in stillness.

Topics Include-anticipatory grief, living with the dying, unresolved feelings/issues, saying goodbye, family dynamics, our own *Death Stance*, and forgiveness.

Week Four-Finding Hope and Joy in the New Normal: Romans 15:13 - "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."

Invitation: The gift of patience and trust in God. Dare to dream again.

Topics Include-embracing feelings and emotions;-name them-own-them, granting yourself space/permission to be where you are, living in trust and patience in the moment-one step at a time, creating a dream board, a healing heart-finding gratitude in the ordinary.

Presenter: Jo-Andrew D'Alessandro Accary, Chaplain, Spiritual Director, Bereavement Specialist