



## About Support Groups . . .

### **What is a Grief Support group?**

This is a meeting of approximately 10-18 people who have experienced the death of a loved one. It is an opportunity to talk about that experience with a group of people who are likely to understand because they themselves have been there. Often, attendees describe the group as a “safe place”, a place where normal people who have experienced significant losses can tell their stories as often as they need, knowing the stories will be respected and held in strict confidentiality by everyone there. These groups are not therapy groups. When it works well, it is healing...but it is not intended to cure long-standing issues of emotional well-being. For that reason, most grieving people who have a history of emotional difficulties are encouraged to seek out individual counseling for grief work. The purpose of the Grief Support group is not primarily a social network even though friendships form as people get to know each other.

### **What happens in a group meeting?**

Generally, the facilitator of the group describes the principles by which the group operates. Attendees are given an opportunity to introduce themselves. At the appropriate time those who wish to do so are given the opportunity to share their stories. Coping techniques are shared. An open discussion period is included and the facilitator provides educational information. Each person participates at the level on which he/she feels comfortable and no one is forced to do otherwise.

### **Who leads a Grief Support group?**

Our groups are facilitated by professional staff members of Hospice of the Upstate. While the facilitator may provide some information on the grieving process, valuable input often comes from the group members themselves.

### **Why might a support group be helpful?**

Persons are helped in a variety of ways such as: (1) Connecting with people who have had a similar experience and, therefore, understand; (2) Talking about their experience long after others have stopped listening (3) Learning to accept the loss; (4) Learning ways to cope with grief, etc.

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