



## I. THOUGHTS ON LIVING AND WORKING WITH REPEATED LOSS

Grief can settle in your bones. It can affect you physically and emotionally. It can affect your spirit. Having to cope with numerous losses in a relatively short span can settle with your body, can accumulate in your bones. To stay in the work requires finding ways to honor yourself and the people with whom you have been with either through their deaths or their transfers. There are some people with whom one forms special connections, and the intimacy of the time, and the nature of being real can touch us profoundly. Tending to our grief is vital to our continued ability to be present to those with whom we work, and with those with whom we have intimate relationships. What follows are some thoughts and ideas for your own use. Discard what does not fit. Try on what appeals to you.

- *Questions to ask yourself at the time of a loss*
  - What about that person was special to me?
  - What did I value about him or her?
  - What did he or she teach me?
  - Do I have any unfinished pieces with them...? Things I want to say to them?
- *A few suggestions on ways to mark a death-loss at work*
  - *Go to a private place, light a candle and sit a bit. Compile (as a staff) a book of poems, inspirational sayings about death, about life, images from nature postcards, cards or photographs that you can turn to and sit quietly.*
  - *Write a card to the family care-givers*
  - *Have a journal for work in which you can process the deaths of those whom you bond find a special card or picture for the cover. Sit for five minutes and catch your thoughts and feelings.*
  - *Have a debriefing buddies – catch 10 minutes to be heard and hugged*
- *Ideas of ways to mark a death-loss when you return home*
  - Have some comfort food around just in case. Soups, pasta, whatever comforts you.
  - Ask yourself, “What does this feeling call for?” for some it’s a brisk walk or run, for other’s it’s relaxing bath, listening to music, wrapping yourself in a warm blanket sipping a hot cup of tea
  - Journaling – listening to what your body is saying to you: i.e. my heart is crying – or about some of the questions listed above.



For some spiritual traditions, a candle in honor of the soul is lit. There may be a special poem, prayer, or just a time of quiet, at time to let your heart feel.

If you live with others, take some time to transition before arriving home. Let significant people you'll be seeing on your return know before you get home that you had a loss, and will need a little time alone.

If it fits, ask for a little time to be listened to and hugged.

### **Other Thoughts**

To do deep work, self-care is not an "elective" but is crucial in order to do this work. There is an "occupational hazard" from this work. There may be times that you can't take care of everything by yourself. Gain and layer your support: friends, colleagues, and counseling. Be very mindful of minimizing the stress. Denial is a powerful old goat. Take care now; don't wait until you become seriously ill.

Do your grief work as it happens.

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