



# ***Walking with the Bereaved***

Bereavement Support Groups  
Formation & Maintenance



# Why was I interested in becoming involved in a Bereavement Support Group?

- I experienced a personal grief journey
- I was invited to form a group by the parish priest
- I had a desire to help others with their grief journey



# How was the Bereavement Support Group Formed?

- Potential facilitators were handpicked
- July 2004 - 6 initial training sessions with 12 facilitators
- Placed several advertisements in “The Word” parish bulletin prior to commencement of meetings
- Letters were sent out to all families who had celebrated a funeral in the parish in the last 2 years
- First official meeting with the bereaved was held 6 October 2004



# How to Maintain the Bereavement Support Group

- Ongoing training sessions and workshops are offered for the facilitators in which aims and objectives are reviewed (August 2008)



- A “Standard Procedure” was formulated to be used as a guide by the facilitators before and during the meetings
- Phone contact and visiting outside the monthly meeting times are encouraged



- Celebrating birthdays and anniversaries
- Literature on grief is available to borrow or keep
- Social functions held several times a year
- Celebration of a Parish Remembrance Mass
- Invite speakers/organize to go to seminars/  
workshops



# How to Promote the Bereavement Support Group

- Regular weekly advertisement in the parish bulletin
- Brochures about the Bereavement Support Group are available
- Word of mouth – referrals received from parish priest, hospitals, organisations, other parishioners and parishes



# How Successful is the Bereavement Support Group?

- There are currently 7 facilitators on a roster basis
- There have been another 4 training sessions/presentations
- 34 bereaved have attended since its conception
- There have been 14 social events
- 2 Remembrance Masses have been celebrated



# *John Paul Care*

## *Bereavement Support Group*

### *Standard Procedure for Facilitating Group Meetings*

- Prior to a Meeting
- On Arrival
- Open with a Prayer/Candle Ritual
- Suggested Dialogue
  - Aims and Objectives
- Close with a Prayer/Reflection (optional)
- Finishing the Meeting

# Aims and Objectives

- provide a regular opportunity to share (grief) stories
- receive and give support within a confidential, safe and comforting environment
- assist in the understanding of the grief process
- assist in the adjustment of loss
- assist in taking on a new direction in life



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# How to Facilitate a Bereavement Support Group Meeting

- Bereavement support can fill the emptiness that comes with loss
- Grief can be an isolating experience
- Give the mourner's grief a name
- Give implicit permission for the bereaved to recall memories of their loved one
- Refrain from trying to "fix" people who are struggling with loss
- Watch for signs that a bereaved person is in trouble
- Listen with the “ear” of your heart.





*“The melody that the loved one played upon the piano of your life will never be played quite that way again, but we must not close the keyboard and allow the instrument to gather dust. We must seek out other artists of the spirit, new friends who gradually will help us to find the road to life again, who will walk that road with us.”* Rabbi Joshua Liebman *“Peace of Mind”*

*from “Good Grief” by Granger E Westberg*

