

**July 30, 2015**

Advice: A Slippery Road During Loss

Taos News Article

*The Taos News has committed to implement a weekly column to help educate our community about emotional healing through grief. People may write questions to Golden Willow Retreat and they will be answered privately to you and possibly as a future article for others. Please list a first name that grants permission for printing.*

**Dear Ted,**

I have recently had a death in the family that has left me sad and emotionally low. I have noticed many of my friends, work colleagues, and family have had “advice” for me and I find myself getting very irritated rather than grateful for their concern. What is this all about? Thanks, Linda

**Dear Linda,**

Thank you for your question. This topic arises quite often and usually includes a level of confused irritation by the person receiving all the well-meant intentions. When you have a loss, there is usually a time of chaos and confusion as you find yourself redefining your life on many levels. In grief, you may find many people who want to support your process, help with your loss, and possibly want to decrease their pain from your grief (vicarious grief) and are able to focus on you rather than their own grief from the loss. Even the best intentioned advice can be irritating and sometimes damaging to the bereaved.

A sentence that begins with “you should” or “you need to” often leads to non-productive support. In the midst of a loss, a person needs the kind of support that comes without much advice. The only time that advice is truly needed is when dangerous behaviors are occurring. Suggestions can be stated in a supportive manner, if needed, while staying away from black and white statements.

When you have a loss you may feel confused, overwhelmed, and exhausted at the same time. You may feel little confidence in having to make decisions and feeling emotionally unsafe can make it very difficult to make decisions. As you do make decisions, backseat advice and hindsight evaluators can undermine your healing process. I like to think, as long as decisions are not dangerous to one’s self or others, good and bad don’t exist. Everything is new as you regroup yourself and rebuild your internal compass to help guide and direct your life path.

While rebuilding your life from a loss, please remember that you may feel uneasy with yourself, but this does not mean you need to believe everything that is said or advised to you. Part of healing is slowly regaining discernment and remembering that grief is individualized and what works for one person may not work for you. Take what works for you while letting go of the rest. This can be a great mantra as you heal and re-empower your self-esteem and decision making process. As a loved one and/or care-

giver, remembering to honor someone's healing process can be difficult and yet trying to rescue someone from their pain, may cause more tension and have irritation turned towards you. Being available, being honest with no agenda, and lending support can be the greatest gift someone can give to someone healing from loss. Honoring their process while not trying to "fix it" can be difficult, but allows the bereaved to start to heal and rebuild their personal foundation in order to make good decisions.

Until next week, take care.

Golden Willow Retreat is a nonprofit organization focused on emotional healing and recovery from any type of loss. Direct any questions to Ted Wiard, LPCC, CGC, Founder of Golden Willow Retreat at (575) 776-2024 or [GWR@newmex.com](mailto:GWR@newmex.com)