

The “Stuff” of Grief

Loss is an inevitable part of living. Hospice Mid Canterbury deals with the grief of loss on a daily basis, from diagnosis of a life-limiting illness to the loss of a loved one. This is one of a series of articles on how to manage grief.

It is tough to deal with the “stuff” of grief; the possessions, clothes, and other belongings of the person who has died. Sometimes it feels so overwhelming, you just keep it all. However, if you are tackling this task, the following may be useful.

There are no rules

When dealing with the stuff of grief, there are no rules. You can make your own decisions on what to keep or what to give away. There is no one right way to cope and there is no timetable. You only need to tackle this task when you are ready.

Even when you do decide to clear out some of the belongings, there are no rules. You may need to go slowly, perhaps alone, stopping at times to sit with your memories. Or you may welcome the support and assistance of friends or family members who want to share in the process.

Sorting stuff

However you do it, having a system can help, such as dividing the “stuff” into categories.

- The first category is special items that you know you want to keep for yourself. It is comforting to have items that hold the memories of your loved one close.
- A second is for things you may be unsure about right now but may want to consider keeping. You may find with some items that you can't decide right now. In the midst of grief, some decisions just need to wait.
- The third category are items that can be donated or given to others, especially items you know will be treasured by the recipient.
- Finally there are things that clearly could be discarded; these items have no value to you, emotional or otherwise.

Remember that this is a tough task for many. Take your time and reach out if you need help.