

RECONCILIATION

Dr. Alan Wolfelt's six reconciliation needs of the mourner emphasizes the following activities.

I will learn to effectively express the reality of the death.

Choosing to attend a support group is a positive initial step. I tell my story and express my feelings over and over again to whomever will listen without wanting to offer inane advice. I need compassionate listeners now, not advice that will cause me to shut off my feelings.

I will learn to embrace pain while nurturing myself.

This means I don't shut off my feelings, and will permit myself to cry in appropriate places and in appropriate times. I permit myself to feel depressed and scared, and to share this with others. I also commit to establishing a routine which provides exercise, nutritious meals, a time to memorialize, a time for friends, and journal keeping with particular regard to my feelings and speculation on meaning in my life.

I will learn to convert my relationship with my loved one from an interactive presence to one of appropriate memory.

This is a process which cannot be deliberately willed. I won't even try. I just make a mental note of it as something that's in the process of happening, and allow my subconscious to do its work without interference.

I will learn to develop a new self-identity.

Over time, I will learn that I am an important person in my own right. I inventory my needs and create a plan to fill in areas where needed. This may involve establishing new friendships and relationships which I will do without guilt. I am a worthy human being who deserves the company of others and has value to offer. My new relationships will be just that—new, not a replacement of my old relationships.

I will learn to relate the experience of the death to a context of new meaning in life.

In this process of reconciliation, I have learned much about myself and my life. I have slowly developed a new perspective on living which honors each relationship as a unique gift from my higher power—most particularly my new relationship with myself. I find that I have much to offer others who are traveling my road.

I will learn to develop a lasting network of support to help me get through the process.

I realize there are others who can help me. Perhaps I've reconnected or strengthened the bond with my immediate or extended family. Perhaps I've discovered the nature of true friendships and am more discriminating in whom I place my confidence. It is so difficult to do it all alone, and I've learned I can count on the love and help of others who have had similar experiences.