

## Begin the Healing

by Suzanne W. Zoglio, Ph.D.

When life as we know it comes crashing down around us, our hearts ache, our minds go numb, a haze seems to surround us. We are shocked, angry, and sad beyond anything we've ever felt before. We are frightened and shaken. We ask, "Why? How could this happen?" And often, we ask, "Why me? Why us? Why them?" Our faith is tested...and also our resolve. We might wonder if we will find the strength to go on...or if we even want to go on. It's all so overwhelming. Here are 10 steps to help you move forward.

- 1. Schedule quiet time.** *Do what you have to do each day, but schedule at least 15 minutes of silence every day for a while. Take a walk alone before work, stop at noon for a bit of reflection, or meditate each evening before bed. Use the time to reflect, weep, pray, or just sit and be aware.*
- 2. Accept your feelings.** *Don't try to push them away. Healing begins with identifying our emotions...whatever they are. Fear, guilt, regret, anger, or sadness...accept them as they surface.*
- 3. Express your feelings.** *Write in a journal, pen a poem, sketch a drawing, or write a letter to a dear friend.*
- 4. Connect with people.** *Be with family, friends, or church groups. Share your pain, and comfort each other. Talk to a counselor, if you wish, or a spiritual leader, but be open to the love and comfort available to you. Know that you are not alone.*
- 5. Create remembrances of what has been lost.** *Hold a memorial service and ask close friends to share memories in a book. Assemble a photo scrapbook of someone lost, or a video collage of treasured moments. Frame a special note or a shared favorite quote. Perhaps you can find a small object (a ring, photo, or small piece of glass?) that will help you to feel connected. Keep it close to you and hold that love forever in your heart.*
- 6. Pass along the love.** *One way to honor a life lost is to give others what meant so much to you...a tender touch, an understanding smile, a shoulder to lean on, or the boost of positive energy.*
- 7. Contribute what you can.** *Donate to an appropriate cause, offer prayers of healing, volunteer your time, give blood, or support your local rescue workers.*
- 8. Be an emotional support.** *Hold someone who is grieving. Listen generously. Tell your own story of this and past recovery so others will not feel alone.*
- 9. Commit acts of kindness.** *In your workplace leave anonymous notes of appreciation, offer to help someone who's on a tight deadline, or simply bring in a breakfast treat. In your community, you might adopt a homeless pet, volunteer to deliver meals on wheels, or rake leaves for an elderly neighbor. Show more patience with everyone you meet.*
- 10. Live each day in meaningful ways.** *Revisit what's important to you...and then schedule it in. Make time for birthday parties and coffee with friends. Tell people what they mean to you. Stop to give thanks for all that you have. Use your gifts every day. Hug your children more...teenage or not!*

And remember that we all heal in different ways and at differing speeds. Follow your heart. Take time to feel, take care of yourself, and take one step at a time.