

May 2007

**ASK HUMAN SERVICES**  
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**Q: My husband passed away over a year ago, but I still feel so much grief, as if it happened yesterday. I don't think I am depressed, because I go to work regularly, see friends and family, and I keep my home clean. It's just when I am alone that I cry a lot, especially at night. The pain of the loss doesn't seem to get any less. What can I do to help myself feel better?**

A: Grief is a natural part of human life, but you do not have to go through it alone. Many studies have shown that talking about grief with others tends to mitigate it. Each community has several support groups dealing with bereavement. You can also work with a counselor. Some people find that writing about the loss helps (i.e. in a journal or in letters to the deceased). Talking about or writing about your grief can perhaps help you get a sense of release and control.

**Q: For as long as I can remember, I have had a great fear of blood. When I see blood or when someone talks about blood, I start to feel dizzy. If I don't remove myself from the scene or the conversation, I will faint. Can I do anything to help myself get over this?**

A: What you have described is known as a simple (or specific) phobia, which is a fear of a particular object or situation where the fear is extreme and irrational. Approximately 1 in 10 people have a simple phobia, the most common types being dogs, closed-in places, heights, tunnels, highway driving, water, flying, and blood. Successful treatment often involves what is called "cognitive-behavioral therapy" where people are taught to change their thoughts and behaviors surrounding the phobia. Systematic desensitization (or exposure therapy), where people are gradually exposed to what frightens them until the fear begins to fade, is one of the most common and successful methods of treatment for phobias.

**Q: How would I find out about any support groups in my area for people with depression?**

A: You can contact your local human services division or local mental health association. You can also contact the National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association toll-free at 1-800-826-3632, and they can provide you with a list of support groups in your area.

**If you would like to submit a question or if you would like to talk to someone about mental health issues, contact the Bloomfield Division of Human Services, located in Room 213 of the municipal building or call 973-680-4017.**