

piece of paper and answer the following: (By the way, you probably won't like what I'm going to say next: If you don't wish to do the writing exercise that follows, I suggest you quit reading this article....)

Are you still reading? Get ready to write. Am I being too pushy here? Yes, because simply reading is not enough to work on this type of grief.

Okay, have I bugged you enough? Great, now let's get started. Do you have your pen in hand?

1. If you could control the manner in which this person copes with the death, what exactly would you like to see this person doing? Not doing?
2. Regarding crying, do you feel this person is crying: too much, too little, or just right?
3. Is there anything you should write to this person? Should you send a text, an email, or even a letter that says something that might help?
4. Is there an article, a book, a website, or a video that might help a little?
5. The next time you get together what should you say to this person regarding their present grief-related reactions?
6. Whenever you begin to experience the frustration, sadness, anger, guilt, and anxiety related to Proxy Grief, can you say the following to yourself:

*"I am doing all that I can to help this person.
Can I begin to let go of the need to reduce this person's grief and let him or her be in pain
and trust that this level of pain will not last forever? It won't"*

This last suggestion is likely the hardest. Each time you see this person, your job has been and will continue to be: Allow this person to grieve in his or her own way. As you read this, you might be saying, "Of course. I know that." Or, "Yeah, yeah, I know, everyone grieves differently." You also know that the death of a loved one changes us forever. You and the person you've been thinking about are different people now.

In coping with Proxy Grief there are three important steps:

1. Continue to do whatever you can to help this person cope with the death. Perhaps one of the suggestions from the list above could help.
2. Continue to find ways to cope with your own pain as you continue to see this person in the depths of their own grief. Reading this article is one of those ways.
3. Trust that, as the weeks turn into months and years, the pain of grief will gradually diminish not only for you, but for this person as well. It may not seem like it now, but it will.

In my bereavement work over the past 30 years I have met thousands of bereaved parents, siblings, grandparents, and widowed people whose grief was additionally burdened with seemingly endless worry about how their family members would cope with the loss. And, when I met some of these same people years later, they all acknowledged the same thing:

Although they could not control their Proxy Grief, through time and caring, their worry, their concern, and their anxiety about how their loved ones grieved gradually diminished.

As you sit reading this article wondering what will happen to this person about whom you have had much to worry, I can make you a promise: Even though it doesn't seem like it now, it will get better.

It will.

*My best to you,
Bob*