

# **Top Ten Touchstones:** **Living When Your Spouse Has Died**

- 1. Articulate both losses and specific action plans for each aspect of your grief.**
2. Find someone **supportive** as you do the griefwork of unfinished business.
3. For most people, **the mere passage of time does not heal**; it is the investment in your griefwork and the sharing of your stories that determines your grief journey.
- 4. Plan ahead for anniversary dates; wedding, birthdays, holidays. Give yourself permission to remain flexible.**
- 5. Embrace a range of feelings, including relief that suffering has ended.**
6. Identify at least three people that you feel are supportive of you as you do your work of grief.
- 7. Be creative as you do your griefwork; magazine collages work wonders when shared, and haiku is both simple and clarifying of the chaos of grief emotions.**
8. Your grief will likely take longer than you want, and longer than those around you often expect. **Our need for support increases as time passes**, especially the first year or two following the death of someone we loved, and still do love. Be supportive of others, too!
- 9. Loneliness is a challenge for all bereaved people**; talking and learning how others have dealt with their loss can be an education and guide for our own grief journey.
- 10. Seasonal Self Checks (SSC) four times/year to assess both progress and challenges of each season.**

**Patrick Vernon Dean, MEd., CT\***, Director of Grief Education Services for Archdiocese of Milwaukee Catholic Cemeteries [[www.cemeteries.org](http://www.cemeteries.org)]  
Founder of Wisconsin Grief Education Center, Inc. in 1988  
[[www.griefwork.com](http://www.griefwork.com) personal email: [patrickdean@griefwork.com](mailto:patrickdean@griefwork.com) ]

\* Certified in Thanatology, Fall 2003