

I'm Grieving - What Can Help?

It may help to think of grief as a journey rather than a hurdle to be crossed. Along this journey we learn how to live without someone who was once a part of our lives. Learning to do anything takes time and practice. Grief is no different. The following ideas have helped others as they have found their way through grief to healing.

Recognize the loss

Many people try to stay busy after the death of someone close to them. Staying busy can be distracting, but too much activity, too soon, may not be helpful. It is important that you do as much as is comfortable for you while allowing yourself time to reflect, rest and feel. It may help to look through old pictures, remember special times, cry when you feel like it and laugh when you feel like it.

Recognize how you feel

There are so many feelings to sort out after someone dies. Simply noticing and recognizing your feelings can help you feel less anxious and overwhelmed. You may find that your feelings come and go more easily when you don't spend energy resisting them.

Express your feelings

Any activity that lets you express what you are feeling can help you cope with grief. Sharing your feelings with a trusted friend or writing in a journal may provide some relief. Drawing, painting, woodworking, listening to music or using other artistic expressions may also be helpful.

Take time to remember

The last days of your loved one's life may be fresh in your memory. Make an effort to remember other times as well – good and bad. It is common for people to avoid mentioning the person who has died because they do not want to upset you. When talking with people who knew your loved one, ask them about their memories and offer yours. This gives them permission to talk about the person who has died and share encouragement and support.

Creating a memory book with photos and mementos of special events, holiday celebrations, or travels may help bring back memories of better days. You may also want to remember your loved one with special activities such as lighting candles of remembrance, attending religious services or planting a tree. Keeping the memory of someone special alive can be a comfort as you grieve.

Honor special events

Holidays, anniversaries, special dates and places may trigger feelings of deep sadness. It is normal to remember and mourn your loss. Be gentle with yourself. The hurt and pain will



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lessen over time. Until it does, you might want to try creating new ways to celebrate or to honor your loved one's memory. Talking with family members and friends who are also missing your loved one might help you come up with ideas that make everyone feel comforted.

Hold off on big decisions

Making decisions may be difficult or confusing when you are dealing with so many feelings. You may find it helpful to avoid making life-changing decisions while your grief is fresh.

Take care of your body

Grieving is hard work that takes a lot of energy. It is easy for your physical health to suffer when you are experiencing loss and grief. Remember the basics – eating healthy food, resting and getting some exercise will give your body the tools it needs to adjust to this strain.

Nurture your spirit

Grief can bring up painful questions and doubts about many of our most fundamental beliefs. You may feel lost and vulnerable. Prayer, meditation or other spiritual activities may bring comfort and reassurance. Consider sharing your concerns with an experienced chaplain, member of the clergy or spiritual advisor.

Talk to others

Grieving can feel very lonely. It is reassuring to know that you are not the only one who has felt this way. Talking to someone who has lived through the death of someone they cared about may be helpful. Consider opening up to a friend, family member, volunteer, counselor or clergy or attending a support group for people who are grieving.

Believe in a less painful tomorrow

Along this journey, there will be good days and not-so-good days. As you heal, the pain of your loss may not hurt as much as it did immediately, but the fact that someone you love is no longer with you will remain. You can adjust to this new life. It will take time.

How are you?

There is no set time limit for grieving, but generally the feelings become less intense as time passes. If you are concerned about how grief is affecting your life, try asking yourself the questions below.

- Am I feeling “stuck” or having trouble expressing my feelings?
- Is my health getting worse over time?
- Have my eating habits changed?
- Am I using alcohol or drugs to cope with my feelings?
- Am I unusually irritable or angry or detached?
- Are my thoughts or feelings interfering with my work or other important areas of my life?
- Am I having thoughts of ending my own life?



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- Do I feel responsible for my loved one's death?
- Do upsetting images keep coming to mind?
- Am I having disturbing dreams?
- Do I feel sad and alone most of the time?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, professional help can make a difference. Individual, family, and group counseling as well as grief support groups are available through The Center for Loss and Healing at Suncoast Hospice.

Call (727) 586-4432 anytime.

To find a hospice near you, contact the National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization help line at (800) 658-8898, or visit www.nhpco.org

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