



**The  
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# Suggestions for Coping with Grief

## Understand Your Grief

- Grieving is the natural response to loss, a gradual process of healing. Each person's grief is unique.
- Grieving is not about "getting over" the death. It is about expressing your sorrow, sharing your memories, and learning how to go forward with your life.
- Grieving is not a mental illness, but it can be a crazy feeling. Changes in your mood, thoughts, concentration, and energy are to be expected.
- Grieving takes time. Each person grieves in their own way and at their own pace. However, grieving is about healing, and most of the intense feelings of grief do become less frequent and less intense over time. Eventually, you will find that your memories bring more pleasure than pain.

## Take Care of Your Heart

- Many grievors feel as if they have lost control of their emotions, never knowing how they will feel from one moment to the next. Painful as these feelings can be, they are all part of the natural response to the death of someone loved. Expect ups and downs, and be patient with yourself.
- Share your thoughts, feelings, and memories with others. It may feel more painful to talk about it at first, but opening the door allows for healing. Find those who are comfortable listening to you talk about it, whether old friends or other grieving people, and let them know how it helps you.

## Take Care of Your Body

- Get regular physical exercise. Whether you are starting from scratch or continuing an old routine, exercise is a good way of keeping your body and mind in balance. It can help you sleep better, lowers your risk of depression, and can boost your immune system.
- Eat well. Appetite changes and changes in eating habits are common, but try to eat regular nutritious meals as much as possible. Grief stresses your body as well as your heart and mind, so your body needs nourishment more than ever.

- As best you can, try to get enough sleep – take naps during the day if you find you can't sleep at night, and rest as much as you need to. Lighten your schedule as much as possible, and don't be too hard on yourself when you can't get as much done as you're used to.
- Consider other ways to nurture yourself, such as massage therapy, yoga or meditation, long baths, or walks in nature.

### **Take Care of Your Mind**

- It is normal to have a hard time concentrating, remembering things, or making decisions. As much as possible, postpone making major decisions. If circumstances allow, do not move, change jobs, or make any large changes to your life until the intensity of your grieving subsides.
- Some people find doing purposeful work helpful. As you begin to have more ability to concentrate, use your mind. Be patient with yourself if tasks feel more difficult.
- Once some time has passed, taking opportunities to give to others is sometimes helpful. This may be as simple as sharing in a support group or may involve giving volunteer time to others.

### **Take Care of Your Spirit**

- Grieving people often feel guilt over real or imagined wrongs. Consider writing a letter to your loved one expressing any sorrow or regrets. Find ways to forgive yourself; remember, we are all human.
- Writing in a journal is often very helpful. It can be a safe, private place to express and explore your thoughts and feelings. Looking back over earlier writings also helps us see the changes we've managed.
- Creative energies can help us heal. Some people prefer creative outlets for their grief, exploring and healing through drawing, music, or other artistic expression. Creating your own grieving rituals, prayers, or poems can also be very healing.
- Find peace in your own spiritual process. For some people, religion is exceptionally helpful in the grieving process. For some, doubts are raised. Remember that personal faith does not make one immune to grief, or to the spiritual doubts grief can raise. Find safe avenues to explore your feelings, thoughts and questions. Take spiritual comfort where you can.

### **Accept Help**

- Many friends and family members do not know what to do to help. As much as possible, let them know what you need and what you find helpful.
- Find those who are comfortable listening to you, who encourage you to be yourself, and who can accept all of your feelings.
- Some people find a support group or grief counseling helpful; often just a few sessions can help you feel less alone. Your local Community Hospice Grief Center provides support groups, counseling, and referrals.