



We are here for you throughout the grief process. Whether it is helping yourself heal; or reaching out to a friend or a child coping with loss, we hope this section of our website will be helpful for you. As always, if you prefer to speak to someone directly, please contact us.

It's All about Giving Yourself Permission to Mourn

Someone you love has died. You are now faced with taking care of all the details of resolving their accounts and notifying various government agencies. And you've got to find time to feel the feelings, and think the thoughts surrounding the death of the person you've recently lost.

You've simply got to mourn. It's just that simple. It is an essential part of healing. You are beginning a journey that is often frightening, painful, overwhelming and sometimes lonely. We have some practical suggestions to help you move toward healing in your personal grief experience.

Realize Your Grief is Unique

No one will grieve in exactly the same way as you. Your experience will be influenced by a variety of factors: the relationship you had with the person who died, the circumstances surrounding the death, your emotional support system, and your cultural and religious background.

As a result, you will grieve in your own special way. Please don't try to compare your experience with that of other people, or make assumptions about how long your grief should last. We suggest taking a "one-day-at-a-time" approach that allows you to grieve at your own pace.

Talk about How You Feel

By sharing your grief outside yourself, healing occurs. Ignoring your grief won't make it go away; talking about it often makes you feel better. Allow yourself to speak from your heart, not just your head. Doing so doesn't mean you are losing control, or going "crazy". It is a normal part of your grief journey.

Find caring friends and relatives who will listen without judging what you say. Seek out those persons who will "Walk with, not in front of, or behind you" in your journey through grief.

Avoid people who are critical or who try to discount what you are experiencing. They may tell you, "keep your chin up" or "carry on" or "be happy." While these comments may be well-intended, you do not have to listen, and you certainly shouldn't try to keep your chin up. You have a right to express your grief; no one has the right to take it away.

Expect to Feel a Mixture of Emotions...at Unexpected Times

Experiencing a loss affects your head, heart and spirit. So you may experience a variety of emotions as part of your grief work. Confusion, disorganization, fear, guilt, relief or explosive emotions are just a few of the emotions you may feel. Sometimes these emotions of grief will follow each other within a short period of time. Or they may occur simultaneously.

As strange as some of these emotions may seem, they are normal and healthy. Allow yourself to learn from these feelings. And don't be surprised if out of nowhere you suddenly experience surges of grief, even at the most unexpected times. Consider these beautiful words:

"It's so curious: one can resist tears and 'behave' very well in the hardest hours of grief. But then someone makes you a friendly sign behind a window, or one notices that a flower that was in bud only yesterday has suddenly blossomed, or a letter slips from a drawer... and everything collapses." ~ Sidonie Gabrielle Colette

These grief attacks can be frightening and leave you feeling overwhelmed. They are, however, a natural response to the death of someone loved. Find someone who understands your feelings and will allow you to talk about them.

Feeling Numb? It's OK...in Fact, it's Expected

Feeling dazed or numb when someone loved dies is often part of your early grief experience. This numbness serves a valuable purpose: it gives your emotions time to catch up with what your mind has told you. This feeling helps create insulation from the reality of the death until you are more able to tolerate what you don't want to believe.

Be Tolerant of Your Physical and Emotional Limits

Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you really tired. Not only that, your ability to think clearly and make decisions may be impaired. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Nurture yourself. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. Lighten your schedule as much as possible. Caring for yourself doesn't mean feeling sorry for yourself; it means you are practicing tried-and-true survival skills.

Build a Network of Support

Don't isolate yourself. We know that reaching out to others and accepting support is often difficult, particularly when you hurt so much. But the most compassionate self-action you can do during this difficult time is to find a support system of caring friends and relatives who will provide the understanding you need. Find those people who encourage you to be yourself and acknowledge your feelings, both happy and sad.

Engage the Healing Power of Ritual

The funeral service was important, but so are those small, personal rituals that we create almost out of thin air. The lighting of a candle in the evening; writing a letter to a loved one, and then burning it, symbolically sending the messages of love up into the heavens. Don't feel shy - your personal rituals are just for you, to help you feel better, and find a spiritual connection to your loved one.

The Hopi Indians of Arizona believe that our daily rituals and prayers literally keep this world spinning on its axis. Through little rituals and thoughts we create a life that speaks to each of us, even in the darkest of times.

So, if you're inspired to do so, create small rituals to help you express your feelings and pay tribute to someone who was, and always will be, loved.

Embrace Spirituality

If faith is part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you are angry with God because of the death of someone you loved, recognize this feeling as a normal part of your grief work. Find someone to talk with who won't be critical of whatever thoughts and feelings you need to explore.

You may hear someone say, "With faith, you don't need to grieve." What ever you do, don't believe it. Having your personal faith does not insulate you from needing to talk out and explore your thoughts and feelings. Always remember that to deny your grief is to invite problems that build up inside you. We heartily recommend expressing your faith, but express your grief as well.

Search for Meaning

You may find yourself asking, "Why did he die?" "Why this way?" "Why now?" This search for meaning is another normal part of the healing process. Some questions have answers, yet some do not. Honestly, it's not important to get clear answers. What's important is to know that healing occurs in the opportunity to pose the questions, not necessarily in answering them. Find a supportive friend who will listen attentively as you search for meaning, without feeling the need to offer their opinions unless you ask them to. An English writer and poet living in the 19th century, Martin Farquhar Tupper, said it best: "Well-timed silence hath more eloquence than speech".

Treasure Your Memories

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after someone loved dies. Treasure them. Share them with your family and friends. Recognize that your memories may make you laugh or cry. In either case, they are a lasting part of the relationship that you had with a very special person in your life.

We often suggest that, when the time is right, you create a Book of Memories™ in honor of your loved one. If this interests you, give us a call. We'll be glad to help you get started, or return to one started earlier.

Move Toward Your Grief... Not Away from It

The writer George Eliot penned these beautiful words... "She was no longer wrestling with the grief, but could sit down with it as a lasting companion and make it a sharer in her thoughts."

When we meet with families, we often share this imagery with them. It communicates the work, in this case the "wrestling" one has to do with the emotions of grief, as well as the long-term goal of the work: becoming comfortable with grief; to sit with it, to embrace it. And, more importantly, to recognize it as your ally, and a natural part of loving someone.

In fact, the capacity to love requires the necessity to grieve. You can't heal unless you openly express your grief. Denying your grief will only make it become more confusing and overwhelming. Embrace your grief and heal.

Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself. Never forget that the death of someone loved changes your life forever. It's not that you won't be happy again. It's simply that you will never be exactly the same as you were before the death



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