

What Do You Need During Grief?

TIME: You need time alone and time with others whom you trust and who will listen when you need time to talk. You may need months and years to feel and understand the feelings that go along with loss.

REST, RELAXATION, EXERCISE, NOURISHMENT, DIVERSION: You need extra amounts of things that you needed before. Hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, and a “cause” to work for to help others—any of these can give you a lift. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people and things you love.

SECURITY: Try to reduce or find help for financial and other stresses in your life. Allow yourself to be close to those you trust. Getting back into a routine helps. You may need to allow yourself to do things at your own pace.

HOPE: You may find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered and time does help may give you hope that sometime in the future your grief will feel less raw and painful.

CARING: Try to allow yourself to accept the expressions of caring from others even though they may be uneasy or awkward. Helping a friend or relative also suffering from the same loss may bring a feeling of closeness with that person

GOALS: For a while, it may seem that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month, helps you get through the time in the immediate future. *Living one day at a time* is a good rule of thumb. At first, don’t be surprised if your enjoyment of these things isn’t the same. This is *normal*. As time passes, you may need to work on some longer-range goals to give some structure and direction to your life. You may need guidance or counseling with this.

SMALL PLEASURES: Do not underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures, as you are ready. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food—all these are small steps toward regaining your pleasure in life itself.

PERMISSION TO BACKSLIDE: Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair, or anger. This is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a period of time. It happens because as humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and the meaning of death all at once. So, we let it in a little at a time.

CAUTION ABOUT USING DRUGS: Even medication used to help people get through periods of shock, under a physician’s guidance, may prolong and delay the necessary process of grieving. We cannot prevent the pain or cure the grief. The only way out of the pain of grief is to go through the experience of grieving.

Helpful Suggestions During the Initial Phase of Grief

- You will need to take time for the grieving process. Do not be in a hurry to get over it. Allow nature to take its course.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Continue or resume your normal routine when it is comfortable again.
- Remember that your powerful and overwhelming feelings of pain will ease in time.
- Share your pain with whom you feel comfortable and accept support when it is offered.
- Surround yourself with plants, animals, and friends.
- Use mementos to help your mourning.
- Avoid major decisions.
- Do not rely on alcohol, tobacco or (street or prescription) drugs.
- Keep a diary and record your memories of feelings about your loved one's past struggles and successes.
- Prepare to meet new friends, make new relationships, and use creative urges to write, build, paint, compose or play music; plan and take a trip; reorganize and redecorate your home.
- Make peace with yourself and others, remembering that what follows is part of the healing process.
- Expect holidays and anniversaries to be difficult at first—they will bring up painful feelings and memories.