

Living with grief

Losing someone you love or care deeply about is very painful. You may experience all kinds of uncomfortable emotions and it may feel like the pain and sadness you are experiencing will never end. These are normal reactions to losing someone you loved or valued a lot. There are some healthy ways to cope with the pain that may help your grief journey to be a little less difficult.

Remember that everyone grieves differently. How you grieve depends on many things, including your personality and coping style, your life experience and your beliefs. Grieving takes time. Growing your life around your loss happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried—and **there is no "normal" timetable for grieving.**

It's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold. Look after yourself and don't be afraid to ask for help. Mourning the loss of a close friend or relative takes time, but research tells us that it can also lead to a renewed sense of meaning that offers purpose and direction to your life.

What you can do to help yourself

When you are grieving, it's more important than ever to take care of yourself. Looking after your physical and emotional needs will help you get through this difficult time.

Take care of your physical health. Grieving can be exhausting, so it's important to eat healthy food – frequent small amounts of easily digested food. Also exercise and sleep. Try massage, spa baths, early nights, get some fresh air by going for short walks. Exercise to use excess adrenaline. Do things you usually enjoy, even if you don't really feel like doing them.

Manage stress – ask friends, family members or work mates to help you with practical tasks. Often people want to help but don't know how, so tell them what you need. Such as help with funeral arrangements, cooking or cleaning, child-minding or just sitting with you.

Don't let anyone tell you how to feel, and don't tell yourself how to feel. Your grief is your own, and no one else can tell you when it's time to "move on" or "get over it." Let yourself feel whatever you feel without embarrassment or judgement. It's okay to be angry, to cry, not cry, or even laugh.

Turn to friends and family members. Talk to those closest to you, or consider joining a support group.

Draw comfort from your faith. Spiritual activities that are meaningful to you – such as praying, meditating, or going to church can offer solace.

Talk about the death of your loved one with friends and work mates. This helps you to understand what happened and remember your friend or family member. Review pictures and mementos.

Remember and celebrate the lives of your loved one. Possibilities include donating to a favourite charity of the deceased, framing photos of fun times, passing on a family name to a baby or planting a garden in their memory. What you choose is up to you, as long as it allows you to honour that unique relationship in a way that feels right to you.

An exercise for when difficult or uncomfortable feelings arise

When uncomfortable emotions arise, take a moment to pause and consider your feelings. Notice physical sensations too: Is your throat tight? Is your heart beating fast? Is your stomach in knots? Just recognising these sensations is an important step. Can you name the feeling?

Breathe. Focus on the ebb and flow of your breath. This can be calming giving you a sense of control.

Reflect. Don't resist the way you're feeling. Instead, recognise that these are natural emotions.

Express your feelings. Write about your loss in a journal; write a letter saying the things you never got to say; make a memory box, scrapbook, photo album, CD, DVD, art work, poetry or music.



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