

Taking Care of Yourself

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- You have been through one of life's most difficult experiences. Every part of your mind, body, and soul has been affected. Life is not the same as usual. It is important that you slow down, get plenty of rest, and good nourishing foods as you recover from the shock of loss.
- Take your time! Again, there are “no rewards for speed,” trying to rush the process as well as denying it may actually delay your real healing.
- One day, you will wake up and notice that you feel freer and lighter, and that the pain has lessened. Until then, please, take special care of yourself.

Be Compassionate With Yourself

- The journey through grief is both long and difficult. It is also a journey for which there is no preparation.
- This newness can be very scary as you experience the painful thoughts and feelings of loss and grief. You may have difficulty thinking clearly and remembering things you have just done. This is normal and will gradually dissipate with time.
- Be compassionate with yourself and not judgmental.
- Let your journey be what it is. And let your new self be who you are.

Nurture Your Body

- Pay attention to your needs for extra rest.
- Eat foods that are good for you, drink plenty of water, and add a good multi- vitamin.
- Comfort foods such as mashed potatoes, chicken soup, and hot cocoa with marshmallows, can help you to feel safe, loved and, at home.
- Exercise not only provides you with more energy; it can also give you focused thinking time. Take a 20 minute walk every day, but don't over exercise, because your body needs extra rest, as well.

Clean Out Your Closets and Cabinets

- The journey through grief can be emotionally chaotic.
- Sometimes amid this chaos it helps to bring order to other aspects of our lives.
- Take everything out and sort the items in four boxes: Keep – Donate - Trash – Can't decide

Put only the keepers back in.

Understand the Role of “Linking Objects”

- You may be comforted by physical objects associated with the person who died.
- Such “linking objects” may help you remember the person who died and honor the life that was lived. Remembering may help you heal.
- Never hurry into disposing of the personal effects of the person who died. Leaving them untouched for months or years is OK, as long as they offer you comfort and don’t inhibit healing.
- When you are ready, you might ask a family member or friend to help you create a memory box of special items you want to keep.

Reassess Your Priorities

- Death has a way of making us rethink our priorities and redefines the meaning of our lives.
- What gives your life meaning? What doesn't?
- Take steps to spend more time on the former and less on the latter,
- Now may be the time to reconfigure your life. Begin volunteering. Move closer to your family.

A Change of Pace

- Do something that you're good at: creative writing, painting, baking. Follow the activity by reflecting on how it made you feel.
- Be Silly: At times, the seriousness of grief will weigh you down. Give yourself permission to relax and find the fun in being silly.
- When you are ready take a mini-vacation or even a drive through the countryside with no particular destination or agenda in mind.

Schedule Something Each Day That Gives You Pleasure

- Having something to look forward to will give you a reason to get out of bed.
- Make a list of things that you would enjoy.
- Ask a friend or group of friends to join you for lunch, a movie, a walk, a game of cards or board games, playing golf or watching a sports match on TV. Being a part of participation with someone will help you to feel normal and accepted again.

Reach out to Help Someone

- Helping another person will give you a deeper sense of your own self-worth.
- This is one of the most powerful ways to find peace and joy within yourself.
- Where you have the opportunity, you might now help others understand the grief and mourning process.

Stay in Touch With Your Loved One

- They are no longer here in the flesh, but you can always speak to them, even out loud (when no one else is around). It is natural and not crazy to do so when you feel the desire to share.
- One of the most difficult but most beneficial activities to further your healing is to write a letter or letters to them periodically. They can be just chit-chatty, telling them what you're doing or deep and heart-felt.
- Following up on your letter to them, write a letter from them as their response to you.

Create a Plan

- Waking up in the morning can often be the most difficult time of day. Having a plan to follow for the first few minutes can be very helpful and give you a point of focus as you move into your day.
- Include some or all of the following into your first 15 - 30 minutes:
 - Read a brief scripture passage and reflect on its meaning to you.
 - Make and read your list of things you are grateful for.
 - Offer a prayer thanksgiving and sit quietly for a few minutes.
 - Spend some time in quiet meditation.
 - Read something that inspires you.

Physical Healing

- Take several deep breaths: gently breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth as if blowing into a straw.
- Practice Deep Breathing before and after your morning quiet time and at several times a day, especially when you feel tense or anxious.
- Take a brisk walk and commune with nature.
- Try to do 10 minutes a day of exercise that increases your heart rate, but don't overdo it, as your body needs to rest more than usual.

Cognitive Healing

- When you have lost a loved one, you may find that you are experiencing moments of confusion, forgetfulness, difficulty making decisions, and inability to focus and concentrate as you normally would.
- Just as a physical wound has to heal from a scrape, so the mind has to heal from the shock of a major loss.
- For a time be patient and suspend attempts to multi-task and allow your mind to “catch-up” with and process your new reality.

Meditation Calms the Mind

- Sit up straight, preferably in a straight - backed chair with your feet firmly planted on the floor.
- Keep your head straight on top of your neck – do not tilt is forward, backward, or to the side. Maintained a straight line from the base of the spine through the neck to the back of the head.
- Close your eyes and breathe normally. Focus on your breath.
- As thoughts begin to some into your mind, acknowledge them and send them off like on the puff of a cloud floating by.
- Return to focusing on your breath. Continue for 20 minutes or more.

Practice Mindfulness to Calm and Counterbalance Your Grief

- Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present in each moment not allowing any distractions to intervene. *
- Focus only on the NOW. Just “be, as you are” in the present moment.
- Periodically, set aside time to practice mindfulness by totally letting go of all thoughts pertaining to the past or future. The more you practice mindfulness, the easier it will become.*
- “This will help to counterbalance your grief, and help you find your way back to the fullness of life again.”*

* (Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph. D.)

Recognize Who You Are

- You are first and foremost a “Child of God.”
- Your life has changed, but God has not forgotten or abandoned you.
- As you look to your Creator for guidance, it will be given.
- If you share your burdens with God, you will notice the “still, small voice inside you “that is the ‘divine spark’ that knows your meaning and purpose. It is your spiritual core. It is the glow of your soul within you. It is your deepest, truest self.

Are you still searching for meaning following the loss of a loved one?

- If so, where do you see your search for meaning now?
- Do you have any “Why” or “How” questions right now?
- If so, what are they?
- Are you wrestling with your faith or spirituality now? Please, explain.
- What can you do to continue to work on this need?

How did knowing this person change/effect your life?

- What are some of the special times you remember?
- What was left undone by their death?
- What can you do about it now?

The Purpose of Life

- “The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.”
- As you use what you have learned, reach out to help others, as they uncover and explore the new needs in their lives.