

Coping with Grief and Loss

Grief is a process in which we remember loved ones who have died and adjust to a life without them. It is a journey in which we learn more about ourselves and work towards rebuilding meaning and purpose in our lives. This requires establishing a sense of a “new normal.”

When coping with a death of a loved one, you will experience a wide range of intense, often overwhelming emotions. Give yourself permission to grieve in your own unique way and in your own time. There is no one “right way” to grieve.

Below are guidelines to help you navigate through your unique grief journey:

- You may feel pressure to “get over it” or “move on.” Be patient with yourself and to allow time for healing.
- Let the tears flow. Tears are a very natural and necessary part of grief. They are not a sign of weakness, but rather a reflection of how much you cared for the person who died.
- Be good to yourself. Now is a time to focus on the basic aspects of daily living. Care for yourself in the most fundamental ways like eating, getting enough rest, and engaging in some mild form of exercise.
- Let people know what you need. Frequently people may not be as available to us in the way that we would expect them to be. This avoidance can come from fear – fear that they will say or do something wrong. When we let others know what we need (like someone to listen or spend time with) they are usually grateful and relieved – and willing to help.
- Consider joining a grief support group or working with a therapist specifically trained in grief and loss. Sharing your story with others who more or less “understand” what you are going through will help you in the healing process and ease feelings of isolation.
- Stay away from drugs and alcohol. It is natural to want to numb out and escape the pain, but drugs and alcohol will cause you more problems and only put your pain “on hold,” prolonging healing.
- It may be comforting to honor your loved one by expressing your feelings through artwork, writing a letter, creating a memory box, planting a garden or a tree, or investing in a good cause.