



Ways to Deal With Grief and Loss

- ❖ **Address first things first** – take care of your physical needs. Eat well, rest, be active, minimize or avoid things that may impact your nervous system such as caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, etc. If you have difficulty sleeping, try resting in a recliner or chair with your feet elevated. Monitor any physical symptoms and seek medical assessment/treatment if needed.
- ❖ **Allow for numbness early in your experience** – this allows you time to gradually deal with loss and allows your emotions to catch up with thoughts and realities.
- ❖ **Breathe** – deep breathing is very effective in reducing stress and anxiety.
- ❖ **Connect and Communicate with others** – speak from both your head and your heart. Utilize a support system of caring family, friends, peers and professionals. Do not hesitate to speak up and ask for help or inform people what may be helpful to you. If your energy level is low, ask someone to assist you in getting what you need by acting as your advocate.
- ❖ **Expect to feel a multitude of emotions** – sadness, confusion, fear, guilt, anger, relief. These emotions may change quickly and may follow each other within a short period of time and are a normal part of coping.
- ❖ **Normalize your experience** – what you are experiencing is a normal, human response. Reassure yourself that coping and grieving involves effort and work and takes time.
- ❖ **Nurture yourself with healthy nutrition** – eat and drink sensibly by drinking water and fruit juices, and eating proteins, vegetables and fruits or the diet prescribed to you by a healthcare provider. Be good to yourself!
- ❖ **Pace yourself** – take things one at a time. Be realistic in your expectations of yourself and others. Recovery takes time, patience and energy. Return to normal routines and schedule when ready.
- ❖ **Search for meaning and purpose** - give some thought to those “Why” and “How” questions, realizing that some of the questions do not have answers. This search for answers is a normal part of seeking explanations for difficult or senseless realities, and working through the questions may help to promote healing.
- ❖ **Stay active** – stretching, walking and appropriate exercise assists in burning off chemicals that are produced by our bodies as a response to stress. Movement and exercise also promote deep breathing, distraction and may improve sleep.
- ❖ **Strive for balance and perspective** - be as informed and knowledgeable as possible. Utilize faith, beliefs, spiritual resources and support if part of your life.
- ❖ **Treasure memories** – stories, experiences, words of wisdom, mannerisms, etc. are some of the best legacies that are left after a loss. Share these memories with family and friends, realizing that they may make you laugh or cry. You may consider individually or as a group memorializing your loss by planting a tree, donating time, services or funds to a special cause.
- ❖ **YOU are a unique individual** – no one will grieve or cope in exactly the same way. Your experience will be influenced by a number of factors. Don’t pressure or worry yourself by comparing your response to someone else’s. Recovery occurs at your individual pace.