

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR HELPING YOURSELF THROUGH GRIEF**

This title is not meant to indicate that others in our lives do not help us through grief. We need the help of friends and relatives and may need the help of a counselor. At the same time, it is important for us to make efforts to help ourselves too. The basic advice is to be gentle with yourself. Remember that a lot of energy is being used for healing. Treat yourself with the same care and affection that you would offer a good friend who had someone close to them die. Most of us are aware of "love your neighbor" -- we forget the part "as you love yourself." Not all suggestions will be helpful to everyone. Grief has its unique side. Choose the ideas that appeal to you.

1. Go gently. Don't rush too much. Your body needs energy for repair.
2. Don't take on new responsibility right away. Don't overextend; keep decision-making to a minimum.
3. Accept help and support when offered.
4. Ask for help -- our family/friends can't read our minds. It is okay to need comforting.
5. Seek help of a counselor if grief is unresolved.
6. REST -- MORE REST -- go to bed earlier.
7. Seek support of others. Invite a friend/relative for dinner or overnight; visit a friend; invite neighbor over and possibly meet new people.
8. If Sundays, holidays, etc., are especially difficult times, schedule activities that you find particularly comforting into these time periods.
9. Be patient with yourself. Healing takes time.
10. Lean into the pain. It cannot be outrun. Let the grief/healing process run its course.
11. Remember, it is okay to feel depressed.
12. Express your grief. Talk, write, draw, sing, exercise, cry -- it is not a sign of weakness. Tears release tension and are healing.
13. Read and learn more about grief. Understanding helps you to realize that you're not "going crazy."
14. Good nutrition is important to help the healing process. Decrease junk food and try to eat a balanced meal.

15. Moderate exercise (walking, swimming, tennis, exercise classes) helps work off stress.
16. Keep a journal -- it is a good way to understand what you are feeling/thinking. Because grief can be so painful and seem overwhelming it frightens us. Many people worry if they are grieving in the "right" way and wonder if the feelings they have are normal.

\* \* \* \* \*

Most people who suffer a loss experience one or more of the following:

- Feel tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest.
- Have an empty feeling in their stomach and lose their appetite.
- Feel guilty at times and angry at others.
- Sense the loved one's presence, like finding themselves expecting the person to walk in the door at the usual time, hearing their voice, or seeing their face.
- Wander aimlessly and forget and don't finish things they have started to do around the house.
- Have difficulty sleeping and dream of their loved one frequently.
- Experience an intense preoccupation with the life of the deceased.
- Assume mannerisms or traits of their loved one.
- Feel guilty or angry over things that happened or did not happen in the relationship of the deceased.
- Feel intensely angry at the loved one for leaving them.
- Feel as though they need to take care of other people who seem uncomfortable a around them by politely not talking about the feelings of loss.
- Need to tell and retell and remember things about the loved one and the experience of their death.
- Feel their mood change over the slightest things.
- Cry at unexpected times.

**THESE ARE ALL NATURAL AND NORMAL GRIEF RESPONSES.**

**CRYING IS APPROPRIATE AND HEALING.**

**TALKING WITH PEOPLE IS ALSO BENEFICIAL.**