



Coping With Loss

- Crying is an acceptable and healthy expression of grief and releases built-up tension. Cry freely as you feel the need.
- Try to maintain a balanced diet, get rest and moderate exercise. Exercise is body work and helps to relieve stress and improve your immune system. Avoid the use of drugs and alcohol.
- Give yourself extra lifts: hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a cause to champion, time with special people, a walk in the woods, a favourite food, etc.
- Whenever possible, put off major decisions (changing residence, job, etc.) for at least a year.
- Talk about your loss. This is the most important thing you can do to reduce pain.
- Read stories of people who have experienced a similar loss. By reading others' words, we find out that we are normal. You will also get ideas of what your journey will be like, how long it will take and how others coped.
- Write about your thoughts and feelings. By getting them on paper, they become less vague and frightening.
- Accept yourself. Be gentle with yourself. Lower your expectations and do not criticize yourself. Begin to understand that you are someone new. Acknowledge and embrace the change.
- Reach out for help if you are having trouble coping with grief and loss. Hospice has grief support programs help you find your way through grief and enable you to begin to embrace life again. Call Hospice at 632-5593.

Do and Don't Suggestions for the Bereaved

by Andrea Gambill

- **Do Mourn** – Mourning is different from grieving. Grief is the internal awareness of pain when we lose someone we love. Mourning is the outward expression of that pain.
- **Do Cry** – Crying is a natural response to pain. Cry when and where you feel the need.
- **Do Talk** – Talking about feelings, needs, memories (good and bad) is an excellent way of mourning.

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- **Do Question** – Don't be afraid to ask all the questions that are in your head. Some of them have no answers, but it is often helpful to phrase the questions anyway.
- **Do Accept Help** – Caring people who surround the bereaved often feel frustrated and helpless. Allow others to help you in whatever ways you can.
- **Do Be Patient** – Don't rush your grief experience even if people around you try to push you too fast. Mourning is like healing a serious and deep wound. It takes time and cleansing and there is pain and weariness.
- **Do Forgive Yourself** – Almost all grievors feel guilt to one degree or another. Bring it out in the open – talk to someone you trust. Accept that you are human. Believe you did the best you could with what you knew at the time.
- **Do Trust Yourself** – Your own instincts are your clearest guide to what is best for you. Listen to your gut. It is usually right for you.
- **Do Tell Others What You Need** – Tell others what your needs are and feel free to change your mind.
- **Do Tell Others When They Have Helped** – Compliment others when they do something you really appreciate. Many people don't know what helps and what hurts.
- **Do Take Care of Yourself** – Try to eat nutritional foods – even small amounts. Avoid alcohol – it is a depressant. Drink lots of water. Try to sleep or at least rest. Take a warm bath to relax. Read something soothing or listen to music you enjoy. Write in a journal. Go for a walk.
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- **Do Consider Help** – Joining a support group can be beneficial. It is comforting to know you are not alone in pain and that you are not going crazy.
- **Don't Stuff Your Grief** – A big mistake made by a lot of mourners is to “protect” the people around them by hiding all the pain of their grief. When people ask how you are doing, don't say “Fine” if you are not feeling fine. Tell them you are sad, lonely or what you are really feeling.
- **Don't Accept Advice Without Questioning** – Listen to advice and then do what is right for you.
- **Don't Give Away Your Rights** – You have a right to feel and express your pain. You have a right to mourn, to cry, to talk, to seek help, to withdraw, to be alone, etc.
- **Don't Rush Your Feelings** – Take your time. There is no time limit on how long you should or should not experience the pain of your loss.
- **Don't Go Against Your Natural Inclinations** – Don't try to change your personality now. Follow your own nature in your mourning process.
- **Don't Make Decisions in Haste** – Let your instincts guide you in life-changing decisions.

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Non-Adaptive Grief

When a person goes through a “healthy” grief process, grief is a long, gut-wrenching experience. Because it may last a longer time than the family and friends will acknowledge that it should, an adaptive grief process may be interpreted by some as non-adaptive - not normal. It is important to reassure survivors that their grief will last a long time and that there is nothing abnormal about their feelings.

However, non-adaptive grief processes do occur and it is important to be aware of the signs of non-adaptive grief. Some clues include:

- not progressing from the shock state;
- gross over or under activity;
- agitated depression;
- unresolved anger;
- pretending the deceased is still living;
- suicidal ideation/activity;
- loss of normal pattern of social behaviour;
- psychotic behaviour;
- constantly acting out loss behaviorally (i.e., repeated failures in business, subsequent marriages, etc.);
- breakdown of family relations;
- severe guilt (resulting in constant blaming/punishing self physically or mentally).

These signs may indicate that a person is not coping well with their grief and may need additional help.

Contact Hospice at 632-5593 for support and professional referrals.

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