

Coping with grief

The impact of grief and loss

- Emotionally

- Physically

- Socially

Reasons we grieve

Feelings associated with the grief process

- Shock, disbelief, denial

- Anger

- Fear

- Guilt

- Helplessness

- Anxiety

- Depression

- Acceptance, hope

- Relief

Dealing with the grieving process

- Grief can be ongoing process

- Grief doesn't have a set schedule

- Grief doesn't mean you obsessively think about what happened

- Grief doesn't mean forgetting

- Grief involves growth

Coping with grief and loss

- Deal with your feelings – What is one thing you can do to help face your feelings?

- Take care of yourself – What are two things you can do to take care of yourself?

- Plan for triggers – What is one trigger you anticipate and how can you manage that trigger?

Building resiliency

- Learn from adversity – Think back to a time when you went through adversity. What is one thing you learned from that experience?

- Build a support system – What are three supports you can utilize in time of need?

- Focus on hope – Name one thing you are hopeful for, no matter how small.

- Expect change – What is one thing you think might change in the next six months?

- Practice gratitude – What is one thing you're grateful for?

Helping others grieve

- What to say

- Listen and offer support

- Acknowledge the loss

- Offer help

Complicated grief – when to see professional help

- You feel like life isn't worth living.
- You wish you would have died instead of your loved one.
- You blame yourself for the loss.
- You feel numb and disconnected for more than a few weeks.
- You have trouble trusting others since the loss.
- The grief interferes with your ability to perform your normal daily activities.

Resources

- National Share: www.NationalShare.org
 - Support for miscarriage and loss of an infant
- Compassionate Friends: www.CompassionateFriends.org
 - Support after losing a child
- Hospice Foundation of America: www.HospiceFoundation.org
 - Grief education
- Grief Net: www.GriefNet.org
 - Online support groups for adults and children
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: www.afsp.org
 - Information on coping after losing someone to suicide
 - Locator for nation-wide support groups
- Other resources
 - Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
 - Where you practice your faith
 - Local hospitals
 - Local funeral homes
 - Local hospice

Coping with the holidays

- **Acknowledge and Accept Your Feelings** – Sometimes we must give ourselves permission to grieve and express our feelings when someone close to us has died. We can't force ourselves to be happy just because it's the holiday season.
- **Be Realistic/Set Limits** – The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. With changes in family and circumstances, comes a natural need to adjust holiday traditions. Don't be afraid to say NO or set limits on the commitments you make. Tell yourself it is OK even when others do not understand or agree with your choice. What is most important is making decisions that are best for you for now.

- **Celebrate Your Loved One** – Create a new tradition that celebrates and memorializes your loved one or co-worker who has died. This can be very therapeutic in coping through the holidays.
- **Take Timeout** – Just 15 minutes alone, free of distractions. Find something that reduces your stress – taking a walk, reading a book, or listening to music. Taking this time for yourself could go a long way in preventing additional stress and give you that much needed energy boost.
- **Stay Active and Keep a Schedule** – Staying physically active is a great way to release natural anti-depressant hormones (endorphins) into your body. Resist tendencies to stay up/get up early to complete tasks as poor sleep and depression are strongly connected.
- **Reach Out/Seek Help** – Reach out and connect with friends, co-workers, family or religious organizations. You may also find it helpful to talk to your doctor or mental health professional. Contacting your EAP is a great place to start.

What to Say to Someone Who’s Grieving

Knowing what to say to someone dealing with grief can be tricky. You want to be supportive, but what do you say? With a little thought, you can find comforting phrases that express exactly what you want to say to comfort someone who’s grieving. Below are some examples of unhelpful and helpful statements.

Unhelpful

- “I know how you feel.”
- “He’s in a better place now.”
- “This is behind you now; it’s time to get on with your life.”
- “In time, something good will come of this.”
- “You should...”
- “People have been through worse.”
- “You have to be strong.”
- “Time heals all wounds.”
- “There’s a reason for everything.”
- “You’ll get over this in time.”
- “Call me if I can help.”
- “You need to move on.”

Helpful

- “Do you feel like talking?”
- “You don’t have to talk; just know I’m here to support you.”
- “There are no words to express my sympathy.”
- “I’m sorry to hear that this happened to you.”
- “I’m sorry you’re going through this.”
- “I can’t imagine how you’re feeling, but I’m here.”
- “I’m not sure what to say, but I want you to know I care.”
- “I’d like to come over and help you with...tomorrow.”
- “Let me cook your dinner tomorrow.”
- “Grief is a process; it’s normal to have these feelings.”
- “I have fond memories of...”
- “You and your loved ones are in my thoughts.”
- “There is no right or wrong way to grieve.”
- “Your (e.g., dad, mom, brother, husband, wife) really made an impact...”