

# Living Through Grief

## **Coping with Grief**

Coping with the loss of a loved one is tiring and difficult. It is the struggle you go through every day to meet your own needs and the demands of your new situation. The struggle is to cope well, rather than in unhealthy or destructive ways. Coping in a good way might indicate maintain your faith, finding value in being around others, or just doing better than you did yesterday.

## **Ways to Cope with Loss**

Everyone reacts differently to loss. It is important to find ways to cope that will work for you. Here are some simple suggestions:

- Talk with your friend about your feelings
- Read
- Soak in a tub
- Take a walk
- Listen to music
- Meditate
- Find, strengthen or re-establish your spirituality
- Work with your hands
- Do something for someone else
- Make a memory scrapbook

## **Adjusting to Loss**

Adjustment starts when you can accept the loss and become determined to live beyond it. Believing you can create a new life for yourself may not be easy.

## **The Way Out of Grief is Through It**

Suggestions for Helping Yourself Through Grief

**Accept your grief.** Remember it is a natural healing process.

**Learn about your grief.** Understanding grief can help you know that what you are going through is normal.

**Write about your loss.** Keeping a journal is not for everyone, but it can be powerful in helping people to heal.

**Accept your Feelings.** Grief has many feelings, some very strong. Accept them, and they will help you learn about yourself and the meaning of your loss.

**Pace yourself; grief takes energy.** A slower pace mixed with periods of play and mild exercise can help you heal.

**Cry about your loss.** Tears can relieve a lot of pressure. Learn to trust your body's need to cry and not to cry.

**Involve yourself in work or meaningful activity.** It can help maintain direction, control and purpose, and it can occupy your mind.

**Think about your loss.** Relive experiences in your thoughts.

**Talk about your loss.** There can be release in talking about your loss. You may need to tell the same stories over and over as part of your healing.

**Do not be afraid to have fun.** Laughter is good medicine.

**Take care of your health after your loss.** Do your best to eat right and get enough rest. If you are due for a physical exam or have put off a health screening, make an appointment. Exercise can release a surprising amount of tension, anger and frustration.

**An Exercise to Help You Cope With Grief**

I will find my own sources of support and use them.

Now is a good time to ask, “ What really comforts me?” Family and friends may have good intentions about what is helpful. But you need to decide what is best for you.

Care for your own needs first. Your body, mind and spirit are a team; allow them to work together and try not to ignore any area.

You may find a need to deepen your faith, since spirituality can be a source of hope and comfort for some.

Counseling may be a healthy choice for some people. Take it as a sign of good health if you choose to get involved in counseling and/or a support group.

**Remember:**

The most loving thing you can give the one you lost is being true to yourself.

Things that can help me cope at present:

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## Coping Exercises

### **Falling Leaf**

Instructions: Stare at a spot on the wall across from you. Visualize a leaf at that spot. With each breath, count backwards from 20 to 1 as you watch the leaf very slowly drift to the ground. At 1, the leaf reaches the ground and you are deeply relaxed.

### **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

Instructions: Only tense muscles in one area. Do not overstress the muscles.

- A. Take three deep breaths. Relax your stomach.
  - B. Tense each muscle group for a few seconds at a time, then relax for several seconds. Focus on the difference between the muscles when tense and when relaxed.
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- 1. Feet: toes and ankles
  - 2. Calves
  - 3. Thighs
  - 4. Hips
  - 5. Stomach
  - 6. Shoulders
  - 7. Arms: upper, lower, fists
  - 8. Neck
  - 9. Face and scalp

### Suggested Reading List

Safe Passage  
By Molly Fumia  
Conari Press, 1992

A Time to Grieve  
By Carol Staudacher  
Harper San Francisco, 1994

Remembering with Love  
By Elizabeth Levang  
Fairview Press, 1992