

Tools To Help You on Your Grief Journey

Grief can be overwhelming.

Death can enter and disrupt our world as the result of long illnesses, or suddenly and unexpectedly. No matter the circumstance, loss effects and changes how we live, and potentially how we heal.

You must figure out how to navigate this hardest of journeys without a loved one. Having tools to help you move forward and heal are important.

Following are some steps that have proven helpful to me and others on their grief journey, I hope they are also helpful for you.

1. Surround yourself with support. Initially, you may want to be left alone with your thoughts or you may be afraid to love anyone else again. Those feelings are completely normal and even expected. Eventually, though, isolating yourself can be unhelpful to your healing.

• **Accept the support of others.** People may sometimes say the wrong thing, but most sincerely want to help- let them. When people offer to bring you a meal or spend an evening with you, accept it. Others may want to help but don't have any idea what to do- think of practical things you need and LET THEM HELP YOU... laundry, yard-work, house cleaning or keeping you company.

2. Keep it real. Be honest with yourself about how you feel and accept your feelings. Part of the healing process involves you allowing your emotions, however intense, to come out freely. This ties directly into my **"100/0 Rule"**. The 100/0 rule is simply this- you are 100% in control of letting others know you are grieving, you are 0% in control of how they respond to your grief. This is imperative to your healing, do not take on the extra burden of feeling guilty about your outward show of grief; tears, grumpiness, silence, they are all part of the process of healing.

3. Express yourself. Feel free to talk about your loss with your support network. If you're not ready to discuss your feelings face to face, start a journal or join an online community of people with similar experiences.

4. Take care of yourself. Stay as true to your daily routine as you can. Regular exercise and good nutrition contribute to your overall emotional health. Go above and beyond your normal nurturing routine and treat yourself to a relaxing massage, a walk in nature, or some time to listen to soft music. I have learned that sweat is a good substitute for tears (at times), a good workout can be a healthy release in multiple ways.

5. Educate yourself. Research the topic of grief to learn the signs and strategies for coping with it. Educating yourself on the subject can be essential to the healing process. Though your journey is uniquely yours, there are others that have dealt with similar losses to you, their insight can be invaluable for your healing journey.

- **As you do your research, you'll begin to understand your feelings.** Though some “whys” will never be answered (or answered to your satisfaction), you will find that you are ‘normal’ and many of the universal truths about grief also apply to you and what you’re feeling and experiencing.

6. Take it one day at a time. When you’re faced with death, all you may see is a blank wall in front of you. Looking beyond the event and imagining life without your loved one may feel extremely challenging. Your feelings may be so overwhelming that they cloud your view. You have to focus on what’s in front of you- healing.

- **Have realistic expectations regarding your progress.** Grieving takes time and energy. Pace yourself: set small goals and celebrate milestones. Expect challenges when special holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays roll around. But be ready to continue on your journey to recovery.

Life After the Death of a Loved one

It’s common for people who are grieving to feel guilty about having fun. You may ask yourself, “How dare I enjoy life without my loved one present?” But in reality, you’re not betraying your loved one by having fun. In fact, the best way we can honor those who have passed away is by living our lives to the fullest.

As a dear friend told me, “Grief and Joy can hold hands”, one does not mean the absence of the other.

Be Blessed, Be Free!

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