

DEALING WITH GRIEF: *Confronting painful emotions*

EASING THE HEALING PROCESS OF GRIEF

Although there are no quick fixes for the anguish after a loved one's death, you can take steps to make the coping easier. Here are some suggestions to consider:

- **Understand that grief is normal.** Grief is the normal, expected response to death — emotions such as intense pain, sadness, disbelief, anger or guilt can be expected. It's the tears, numbness and physical exhaustion — the rush of memories and the yearning for the person you lost. It's also normal to be surprised by the intensity of your grief.
- **Allow yourself to mourn.** Mourning is the outward or public expression of grief, a means of sharing grief with people who also are grieving or who want to support you. Religious rituals, cultural traditions and personal beliefs often shape how we mourn. Whatever form it takes, mourning is a critical process that can help you lessen the intensity of grief and help you adapt to your loss.



- **Look to others for support.** It's not uncommon to feel alone in your grief or want to avoid others. However, the support of family members, friends or a spiritual leader is often essential in moving on from the severe, immediate grief after a death. Let people know when you need someone to listen and be open to their offers of company.
- **Take care of yourself.** Grief commonly results in disrupted sleep, a loss of appetite and a lack of interest in everyday tasks — all factors that can affect your health and well-being. Be mindful of your health and daily habits. Try to get adequate sleep, eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly. You might find that including a friend in meal or exercise routines can keep you motivated. Consider a medical checkup to ensure your health has not declined, especially if you have any existing health conditions.

- **Don't make major decisions while grieving.** Grief might cloud your ability to make sound decisions. If possible, postpone big decisions, such as moving, taking a new job or making major financial changes. If you must make decisions right away, seek input from a trusted family member or friend.
- **Remember that grief is unpredictable.** Grief doesn't move along a predictable path or at a fixed pace. The overwhelming grief following your loss will become more of a cycle of grief. And over time your grief will likely become more subdued, or it may feel less constant as if it's moved into the background of your emotions.

But long after a death, you may also find yourself caught off guard by a moment of profound grief, for example, on the anniversary of the death, during holidays or on your loved one's birthday.

- **Grieving is a process.** It will be unique to you, depending on your own personality, your relationship to the person you lost and even the circumstances of the death. The acceptance of your loss, the memories of your loved one, and your sorrow will gradually become an integrated part of how you see yourself as a whole person.

5 T'S FOR HEALING

In time, those memories will bring more and more comfort and thinking of them brings a smile to your face. Consider the five T's for healing:

Time: as was mentioned, time does ease the pain of grief and loss.

Talk: it's important to share your feelings and your stories to those who are there for you.

Tears: tears can also help communicate your emotions and are a part of the body's natural pain response.



Touch: physical contact is one of the central forms of perceptual experience and can be very healing.

Tolerance: be extra tolerant of yourself and some of the things that seem close to impossible to accomplish when your grieving. Sometimes we can be hard on ourselves and this can affect our own self-worth and confidence and smother the "hope" that is needed during these hard times.

If after a few weeks you feel your grief is affecting your ability to carry on with daily activities and is impacting your ability to work and connect with others, it may be time to contact a professional. **CARE WorkLife Solutions** offers sessions with one of our experienced master level counselors. They can be in person or virtual – whichever you are comfortable with, and are completely confidential and at no cost to you.