

# Overcoming Grief: 10 Tips for Coping With Loss

## 1. Remember and celebrate the life of your loved one

Grieving a loved one is a painful and bittersweet experience since part of that grief process is recalling memories of the person you have lost. An important part of healing is remembering and talking about your loved one.

Often the term celebration of life is used as an alternative to a funeral, as this phrase offers a reminiscent quality that honors the memory of the deceased and celebrates what this person brought to the world. By allowing yourself to remember, talk about and celebrate the life of your loved ones, you can honor them in important ways.

## 2. Acknowledge your feelings

Grief can be such a painful experience that sometimes people actively avoid their feelings in the hope of sparing themselves the discomfort. When it comes to grief, avoidance does not work. Avoiding grief may seem like the best alternative, but the pain awaits you, and eventually, it needs to be faced and experienced.

Emotions relating to grief can vary tremendously. You may find that your feelings change rapidly and it is perfectly normal. Acknowledge your feelings, not only to yourself but to others. As you are grieving, you may experience sadness, guilt, anger and remorse. It is also not uncommon for feelings of relief to emerge, particularly if the loved one had been suffering.

This range of emotions is a normal part of grieving. Acknowledging it and expressing it is a healthy way to navigate the grief process. As you talk about your feelings and remember the life of your loved one, others are likely to do the same, which can help facilitate their healing as well as your own.

## 3. Take care of yourself

Grief can be so intense at times that it can interfere with your ability to notice your own needs. Grief and self-care is an important consideration. Even though it may feel unimportant in the moment, it is crucial.

Taking care of yourself can be defined in many ways and is truly an individual experience that only you can determine. What does self-care look like for you? Getting adequate sleep, attending to physical health and staying connected with friends are helpful ways to keep your wellness on track during times of grief.

Taking care of yourself may mean saying no to extra responsibilities or obligations for a while. Grief can be exhausting and may mean that you need to protect your energy until you start to feel better. Attending to your self-care during times of grief is a necessary focus to move toward healing. It isn't selfish, self-absorbed or greedy. Self-care is a way of honoring your own health and wellness as you recover from a major loss. Self-care is self-compassion.

## 4. Maintain a healthy diet

An important part of self-care is eating well. During a period of grief, it may feel difficult to eat adequately. Sometimes depression, anxiety and physical symptoms of grief can result in a worsened diet and decreased ability to eat normally. Because of these physical and emotional demands, it is even more crucial to consume a healthy diet.

Eating a healthy balance of vitamins and minerals is an important part of managing grief and depressive symptoms. Avoiding empty carbohydrates, sugary foods and alcohol are also important factors in maintaining a healthy diet during periods of grief. Even if you find yourself eating small amounts at a time throughout the day, making those food choices count can make all the difference in how your body feels and recovers.

Remember that making drastic dietary changes during a period of grief may not be the best idea. Perhaps you can maintain your usual eating patterns during this time, and incorporate healthy foods for depression. Drastic changes during times of grief can be risky. It may be best to make small changes, and this includes your dietary habits.

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## 5. Get moving

Using exercise to cope with grief is a healthy strategy for healing. Exercise and grief are a good combination because of the natural boost that exercise offers your mind and body. Not only does exercise improve cardiovascular health, but it also releases endorphins in the brain that create feelings of well-being. Exercise helps depression in many ways, and grief is no exception.

Whether you take up biking, jogging, yoga or simply walking with a friend, there is no wrong way to do it. Incorporating exercise into your daily routine can significantly benefit your depression and grief experience. It may be helpful to join an exercise class where you can meet other people and focus on a common activity. The distraction of meeting others in a social situation while enjoying some healthy physical activity is a great coping strategy for grief and depression.

The act of getting more in tune with your body's needs and strengthening your physical health is an ideal way to treat yourself well during your time of grief. Exercise will not cure grief, but it is a healthy method of dealing with difficult emotions when they arise.

## 6. Understand that grief is unpredictable

Grief can make you feel completely out of control, which is an unnerving feeling and can bring a great deal of discomfort. The unpredictability of the grieving process is normal. You may find that you are crying at unexpected times. Strong feelings can emerge, seemingly from nowhere, and can hijack any given moment during periods of grief.

It may be that during your grief process, you find yourself surrendering to the tides of emotion as they come and go. It may seem as though you are at the mercy of these strong feelings, and that is completely normal. The more you try to avoid feelings and maintain control, the more difficult it will be to recover from grief.

Remember, no one should expect you to be "over" it, or to "snap out" of grief. There is no specific time frame for grief, and it is individual and unique to the person experiencing it. Your feelings may be unpredictable, and that is to be expected at a time of great loss.

## 7. Be patient with yourself

As you experience the range of emotions that come with grief, be patient with yourself. You may have times in which you wonder if you will ever feel fine again. Sit with those moments and trust yourself to heal. It will happen, and it takes time. Be gentle with yourself.

Listen to what your mind, body and spirit are asking for and honor your needs just as you would honor the needs of your loved one who has passed. Often we hold ourselves to a different standard than we do others. Ask yourself how you would treat a friend who was grieving and give yourself the same kind of compassion and love.

Grieving takes time. There is no shortcut around it. It is a natural process we experience when we care deeply for someone who has died. Offer yourself the love, kindness, compassion and patience that you would give to a friend.

## 8. Reach out to others dealing with loss

One of the best ways to walk through your grief and heal from it is by reaching out to others who are dealing with loss. Helping others deal with grief is a mutually beneficial endeavor. It is a powerful experience to sit with others who are going through the same emotions of grief and loss. Conversing with others who are grieving offers a sense of normalcy that is hard to come by during periods of grief. The feeling of connection with others who are grieving can offer hope and healing to all involved.

Not only reaching out to loved ones who experienced the same loss but reaching out to people in the community who are grieving can be a significant benefit. No one should be left alone to grieve. It is therapeutic to be with others who are going through the same emotional journey and to talk about the impact of grief on one's life.

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It may surprise you how similar your grief experience is to others, and talking about it openly can offer a level of healing that is unparalleled. Connecting with others and sharing similar feelings is a therapeutic experience that can help with the grieving process and facilitate healing.

## 9. Seek out support

Seeking support is crucial during times of grief. Support can come from friends, family, grief support groups, grief counselors and online support options. Community resource guides and local listings are often the ideal places to locate support groups. Many physician's offices have lists of support resources available in your community. Most local hospitals have connections with social workers and hospice programs. These resources commonly offer grief support groups to people of all ages.

There are countless ways to access support, and the important step is to reach out and ask for it. Sometimes when grief is overwhelming, it can be difficult to ask for help, but remember that people aren't mind readers. The best way you can get help and support is to let others know you are struggling. Grief doesn't have to be compounded by loneliness. Support is available and accessible if you can take that first step of reaching out.

## 10. Accept your new reality

One of the final stages of grief is acceptance. Early on in the grieving process, it may feel impossible that you could ever make it to a place of acceptance of this new reality without your loved one. Accepting grief and loss is a hard-earned accomplishment in the grieving process. There are stages of grief, and it is normal to go through these varying stages at different times during your healing process and even return to prior phases just when you think you've finished with them.

As you navigate this new reality that includes loss and grief, you may eventually develop a sense of meaning around your loss, or a recognition that this grief experience has changed you in profound ways. Grief can be a gift, and it can open your eyes to the important aspects of life and bring you back to your core values through this intense pain and loss.

As you accept your new reality, grief can manifest in different ways that feel more like a blessing than you could have imagined. Be patient with your growth, your emotions and your healing process. Part of accepting your new reality will be establishing acceptance of growth throughout the process. It is common to experience feelings of guilt when healing begins. Remember that your healing is part of the gift of grief and it honors your loved one. It is not a betrayal to get well and recover from grief; it is a natural, healthy part of the process.