

10 Tips for Healthy Grieving

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1. Remember Grief is a Process, not a one time deal:

It can help to talk about your loss with people you trust so that you don't keep the stress of grief shut up in your body.

2. Don't Give Yourself a Timeline To Grieve:

Grieving happens involuntarily, whether or not we want it there. It's best not to fight it, but to allow the feelings to be there for as long as they need to be there without pressuring yourself to stop or succumbing to outside pressure.

3. Don't Neglect Your Health:

This is a big one, because we hardly realize that painful emotions can be stored in our body and without proper self care and nourishment, rest, or medical care, as needed, we can wind up hurting ourselves physically.

4. Resist The Urge to Self Medicate:

As hard as the feelings can be, it's important to make sure you're treating yourself with tenderness and good care. Resist the urge to use drugs or alcohol or any other addictive behavior to numb the pain of grief. It only delays it and can make it more complicated.

5. If You Feel Lonely or Isolated, Consider Seeking Out Other Grievers:

Supportive groups might not be for everyone, but if you're feeling isolated in your grief, it would be beneficial to seek out other grievers. It doesn't have to be a formal group— it can be through a religious affiliation, others you know who have gone through a similar experience, or more formal organizations. There is value in the empathy and understanding that comes with people who “get it”.

6. Give Yourself Permission to Say No:

Grieving is a challenging time, like no other. Boundaries at this time are going to be vital to preserve your inner strength and also for you to know and respect your own needs. If you cannot do something that you have agreed to, give yourself the grace to change your mind and the permission to say no. Sometimes, having a Plan A and a Plan B, is a good way to handle events after a loss, as a way to connect, but to also feel you have control over how you spend your time if you cannot engage socially.

7. Consider Writing a Letter to Your Loved One:

What do you wish you could tell your loved one right now? What did you want to say, but didn't get a chance? This letter writing activity can be something you do once, or every day to stay connected to your loved one and to process the painful emotions of the loss. You don't have to show it to anyone if you don't want to, but there is profound therapeutic value in writing.

8. Don't be Afraid of Your Ever Changing Emotions:

Grief is a strange animal- it brings up various emotions, sometimes on different days, and sometimes without minutes or hours of each other. If it's anger, let it be anger without the added burden of guilt, if it's sadness, let the tears come if they need to be released. Whatever the emotion, this is the time to welcome them all without guilt or judgment.

9. Know When to Reach Out for Professional Support:

There is nothing wrong with getting support for your persistent feelings of grief. Grief counseling can help support and guide us through painful cycles and sometimes confusing emotions. There can be moments when we feel "stuck" in our grief and a trained and knowledgeable therapist can help us to navigate this terrain with gentle care and guidance. When in doubt or if you feel the weight of overwhelming depression or anxiety around the loss, reach out for help.

10. Be Patient With Yourself:

Don't set any expectations of a "I'll be over it by then" timeline. Within grief, it's common to have or feel setbacks from time to time, especially around anniversaries of any kind, birthdays, and holidays. Be gentle with yourself and give yourself the space and patience to feel whatever comes up, knowing that it's normal to have the grief rise to the surface during parts of the year. Like I said in my first tip, it's important to look at grief as a process and not a one time event, so that you will not lose hope over what can feel like never ending pain. The pain does ease, and although we don't "get over" grief, we do learn how to move forward *with* our loss one moment at a time. Remember, you don't have to go through this alone.