



# Healing yourself after a loss

Grief is experienced whenever you lose something important to you. It is so powerful that people sometimes look for ways around it rather than experience it. This approach will not work. The best thing you can do for yourself is to work through your grief and express your feelings. The following are some specific ways to help you work through grief.<sup>1</sup>

## Basic Health Concerns

Grief can be exhausting but it's important that you continue your daily health routines.

- Eat regular, nourishing meals. If it is too difficult to eat three regular meals, try four or five small ones. Have nourishing food available to nibble on, rather than chips and candy.
- Stay hydrated. Drink a lot of water and other healthy fluids. Avoid excessive amounts of alcohol, coffee and tea because they act as a dehydrating agent.
- Get plenty of rest. Try to develop regular bedtime routines. If you are having a hard time getting to sleep, try a glass of warm milk or some soft easy-listening music to soothe your thoughts.
- Exercise for good health. Continue your exercise program and develop a manageable routine.
- Meditate to calm and relax your body. Meditation, perhaps in the form of prayer or yoga, can help you get the rest you need.
- Communicate with your physician. Make sure your family doctor knows what has happened so he or she can help monitor your health.

## Outside Support

- Grief does not have to be as isolating as it can seem.
- Look for a support group, lecture, or seminar that pertains to your situation.
- Continue attending church services and stay in contact with this "community," if that has been a source of support to you.
- Let your friends and other family members know about your emotional or physical needs. The more they know about what to do to help you, the more available they will be.
- Feelings
- Read books or articles on the process of grief so you can identify what you are feeling and have some ideas on how to help yourself.
- Have a good cry. You feel lighter after you have done this. Consider sharing your tears with other loved ones in support of each other.
- Find friends or family members with whom to share your feelings.
- Be careful not to use alcohol, drugs, or tranquilizers. These will only mask the pain and could lead to problems.
- Keep a journal to identify feelings and also to see progress.
- Plan holidays and anniversaries. They are impossible to ignore. Look for a workshop on dealing with grief during the holidays. Make plans with your family and friends.
- The feelings you experience won't come in any set order or over a specific period of time.

## Be Kind To Yourself

- If you desire some time alone, be sure to take it as often as needed.



- Give yourself rewards along the way as something to look forward to.
- It's difficult to feel good about yourself when grief is strong. Find small ways to pamper yourself and take time to focus on you.
- A change of scenery can help ease your grief but it won't end your feelings of sadness and grief.
- Look for some new interests, perhaps a new hobby or resuming an old one.
- Carry a special letter, poem, or quote with you to read when the going gets tough.
- Try to enjoy the good days and don't feel guilty for doing so. Grief does not mean letting go but keeping your loved one with you emotionally, even though they are no longer with you physically, as you continue to move forward with your life.
- Reach out to help someone else.
- Learn to have patience with yourself. Remember that grieving takes time. It is a process and can take different forms and meaning over time.
- Know that you will get better.

### Help For Your Marriage and Relationships

- Good communication is necessary. Unfortunately people cannot read your mind. They may not know that this particular day is difficult, or they may not know how to help you.
- Talk about what is helpful to you and what is not helpful to you.
- Be sensitive to the needs of your partner. Grief is different for each person.
- By reviewing past losses together, you can understand how your partner may react to the recent one.
- Avoid competition about who is hurting most. Each person copes differently. Grief is hard for everyone.
- Consult each other regarding birthdays, holidays, and anniversaries. It is a mistake to hope the holiday will slip by unnoticed. Make plans and discuss them.
- Try not to expect too much from your partner. People do not operate at 100 percent during the grieving period. The dishes may not get done or the yard may not be mown as regularly as before. Many chores can wait. Hire someone to help you catch up.
- Read and educate yourself about the grief process. Go to the library and get an armload of books. Read ones in which you feel the author "is speaking to you" and return the others. Grief books do not need to be read cover to cover. Look for a book with a detailed table of contents that will enable you to select certain sections as you need them.
- Consider "gender" differences. Men and women grieve differently. Usually women are more comfortable expressing their emotions. Men often get busy, burying themselves at work or taking on projects at home.
- Avoid pressuring your partner about decisions that can wait. Of course, some decisions cannot be postponed, and those you will have to handle. However, many can be put off for a day, a week, or even longer.
- Take a short trip to "regroup." If a child has died, it is very important to acquaint yourself with the new family structure. Getting away from the telephone and memories for a few days can help you do this.
- Seek professional guidance, especially if you feel your loss is interfering with your marriage or relationships.



### **Resources Are Available**

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at [www.MagellanHealth.com/member](http://www.MagellanHealth.com/member). Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.