

Take Care of Yourself as You Grieve

You have the task of actively feeling and dealing with the pain and work of grief while at the same time taking care of yourself. In order to help yourself, consider the following:

1. **Recognize that you must yield to the painful process of grief.** Experiencing and releasing the feelings of grief is the healing part of the process.
 - a. Talk with a safe listener.
 - b. Talk to the deceased by using an empty chair, visualization.
 - c. Write a letter to the deceased.
 - d. Keep a journal of thoughts and feelings.
2. **It is understandable that you would wish to avoid the pain of grief.** This is natural, however, you must continue with your grief work in order to go on with your life in a healthy manner.
3. **Be patient with yourself and do not expect too much.** Don't increase your stress by unrealistic standards or comparing yourself to others.
 - a. Find ways to reduce your life stressors.
 - b. Remember that your grief is unique.
4. **Find ways to replenish yourself.** The work of grief is draining. Attend to your needs: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.
 - a. Prayer and meditation.
 - b. Search for meaning in the loss.
 - c. Rest
 - d. Music, art
5. **Take breaks from your grief - temporary escapes from reality: book, movie, vacation imagery.**
6. **Give yourself quiet time alone.** Time to reflect on and process your feelings, review your relationships, etc.
 - a. Review photo albums.
 - b. Create a story of your relationship.
7. **Engage in some sort of physical activity.** This will help release pent-up emotions: walking, hiking, bicycling, gardening, house cleaning, etc.
8. **Remember that grief involves not only dealing with emotional responses but coping with practical problems as well.**
 - a. Tending to practical day-to-day concerns.
 - b. Tending to grief-related concerns, taking care of deceased's belongings.
 - c. Take care of problems one at a time.
 - d. Accept support and help from others.
9. **Avoid making precipitous changes or engaging in flight. Avoid making major decisions or changes for one year, if possible.** If not, entrust the support of an objective person.
10. **Maintain good physical health.**
 - a. Listen to your body.
 - b. Remember there are physical aspects of grief.
 - c. Balanced diet, exercise, rest
 - d. Get appropriate medical attention when needed.
11. **Be prepared for special events or days.**
 - a. Have a plan.
 - b. It's okay to change traditions.
 - c. Create new traditions.
12. **Seek professional help, if:**
 - a. Compared to normal grief, your grief is absent, delayed, excessive, distorted or overly prolonged without changing.
 - b. You think you need it.
 - c. You have active suicidal thoughts.
 - d. You engage in addictive behaviors.
 - e. You are isolated.
 - f. Other professionals refer you to mental health professionals.