

Helpful Ways to Cope With Grief

Grief is a very personal experience. It is unique to each mourner, and often comes in waves. You may feel peaceful one moment and feel an over-powering emotion the next. These strategies can help you cope with, and recover from grief.

1. *Take time out*

Experiencing grief is like recovery from illness. Some days will be easier than others. Recognize your limits. Prioritize things that must be done from those that can wait. If you must cancel commitments, people will understand.

2. *Avoid making big decisions*

Grief can make it difficult to see beyond the pain you feel. Big decisions – like moving or changing jobs – can have unexpected, long-term consequences. Discuss important decisions with a trusted friend before you act.

3. *Communicate*

Painful feelings held need to be released before you can start to heal. Ask friends to listen as you express your feelings. If you need more support, talk with a professional counselor.

4. *Express yourself creatively.*

Creative expression can provide insight into the deep emotions of grief. Painting, sculpting, crafting, journaling, writing letters, or listening to music can help you express your feelings.

5. Honor your loved one's memory

Preserve your loved one's memory in comforting, meaningful ways. Frame a favorite photo or compile a scrapbook of letters and mementos. Plant a tree or favorite flowers to create a lasting tribute. Contribute time or money to your loved one's favorite cause or charity.

6. Take care of your physical health

Grief takes both a physical and emotional toll. Rest, exercise, and proper nutrition are essential to healing. Eat small amounts of healthy foods rather than large meals. Taking just a brief walk will lift your spirits and help you sleep.

7. Avoid using chemicals to numb your feelings

A glass of wine may be enjoyable with a good meal, but overdoing it can create new problems. Numbing your feelings with alcohol or drugs will only prolong your pain. Realize that eventually you must come to terms with your grief.

8. Have fun

Take a break from focusing on your grief. Have fun when you can. Read a good book, watch a movie, play cards, or resume other activities you enjoyed before your loss. Don't feel guilty about it.

9. Plan ahead for special occasions

Anniversaries and holidays can be stressful when you've lost someone you love, especially during the first year. Talk with your loved ones about your concerns, or introduce new traditions to mark special occasions.

10. Reach out

Your grief may be so intense that you feel like withdrawing or isolating yourself. Instead, make a date with an old friend or invite a neighbor to lunch. Volunteer with your church or favorite charity. Slowly ease back into your routine.