



connect

wellbeing, ability, recovery

BEREAVEMENT | WORKSHEET

Looking after yourself is important. Grieving is a natural process as we adapt to the loss of someone close. Losing a loved one is a shattering event that affects you emotionally, physically and spiritually. Try to look after yourself.

Suggestions include:

- Diet and exercise – grief impacts on the body and can cause symptoms such as sleeplessness, anxiety and gastrointestinal upsets. Take care of yourself by paying attention to diet and getting regular exercise. Make sure that you receive good medical care.
- Relaxation and sleep – schedule time every day to wind down, using whichever method works for you: for example, taking a bath, reading or listening to music. Try to get adequate sleep – grieving can be exhausting work. Include activities that you enjoy.
- Avoid drugs – try to avoid drugs such as cigarettes and alcohol to help you manage your grief. They may temporarily dull your pain but cause other health and behavioural difficulties.
- Be realistic – try to be kind and gentle to yourself. Accept that you need to grieve in the ways that feel natural to you. Don't judge or criticise yourself for not coping as well as you think you should.

Coping strategies

You may need to experiment to find out which strategies are most helpful for you.

Suggestions include:

- Crying – some people feel that crying isn't appropriate or else they're afraid that once they start crying, the tears won't stop. If you feel the need to cry, go ahead and do it. Crying is a normal human response to intense feelings. However, if there are no tears, it does not mean there is no grief. Many people cry alone, perhaps in the car or in the shower.
- Time alone – schedule time alone every day to focus on your feelings and express them in whichever way feels natural to you. For example, you may choose to pray, cry, look through photographs of your loved one or write a diary.
- Activity – many people find it important to engage in physical activity as a way of releasing tension and distracting themselves for a time from the intensity of grief.
- Time with your family – schedule time to grieve as a family. This could include talking about the deceased, crying together and sharing your feelings. You may want help from friends and family, for instance with sorting out possessions.
- Support team – actively seek out support. Others can't always make the first move. They may be afraid of intruding on your privacy. Make your needs known. This could include friends, workmates, doctors, community health centres, bereavement support groups or professional counsellors.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF



- Memorial – you may like to write letters to your loved one, plant a memorial tree, put together a special photo album or commemorate their life in whichever ways feel meaningful to you and your family.
- Professional help – Your General Practitioner (GP) may have helped care for the person during their last illness and may be the ideal person to talk to. Your GP may also offer a short course of medication to help you sleep or to help with symptoms of depression. Most GP surgeries will also have a counselling service available. Your GP will also be able to help with details of local support group. See your doctor for help and referral if you feel dangerously out of control: for example, if you're angry enough to want to hurt yourself or someone else.
- Don't rush into major life changes – Moving, remarrying or having another child are too important to rush. This is no time for major decisions. Your judgement may be poor and the changes could add to your stress.

Moving on with life

'Moving on' involves the need to take on new roles and make new kinds of contacts in the world – making a new set of friends, finding a support network, relating to others in a new way, taking on new roles in the family. Depending on your belief system, you may find this a time of growth or it may make you question your beliefs. As grief progresses, more energy is available to be released into the new life that the bereaved person has created. It does not mean a giving up of memories, but rather a release from a central attachment to the deceased person so that there is more room and energy for engaging in life in the present. For some this will mean integrating their experience of loss into a larger acceptance of human mortality.

Accepting a changed life

Accepting the inevitable. Some things in life have no basis in logic; they just happen. Accepting this can prevent much bitterness and self-blame. Accept that life is for the living. Though it may be hard to believe now, at the right time this can be accepted.





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