

Suggestions for Coping

People grieve in different ways. Don't measure your progress against another's.

Feelings

- + Acknowledge feelings, don't judge them
- + Crying can be therapeutic
- + Confront guilt by accepting you did the best you could
- + Journal about your feelings
- + Exercise to trigger positive brain chemicals, and release feelings physically; particularly effective with anger
- + Use the arts to express feelings: music, visual arts, writing

Behaviors

- + Experiment with items that remind you of deceased: pictures, jewelry, music, places, etc to see what brings comfort
- + Make appointments with yourself for rest, social time. etc.
- + Carry tissues everywhere
- + Reconnect with social support or join a grief support group
- + Get help with difficult tasks (cleaning out deceased's closet, going through legal, financial matters)
- + Make all social plans dependent on how you're feeling at the time of the event

Physical

- + Develop regular bed time rituals
- + Eat small healthy meals rather than "three squares"
- + Have a check-up with your physician
- + Get pill boxes or a chart to help keep track of taking your own medications appropriately
- + Use only medications prescribed by your physician
- + Avoid alcohol which is a depressant
- + Minimize caffeine which can lead to nervousness
- + Take naps early in the day if tired
- + Practice deep breathing
- + Choose comforting physical activities (massage, warm bath, watching the sunrise/sunset)
- + Drink plenty of water

Thinking

- + Make lists and leave in a predictable place: "To do;" "New tasks accomplished"
- + Share concerns about any atypical experiences with a trusted friend or professional
- + Expect confusion and memory loss as normal
- + Break down tasks into component parts
- + Read and learn about grief as a process
- + Try to have compassion or laugh at your mistakes
- + Think of yourself as someone recuperating and do your best
- + Tell your story even if you repeat yourself to people you trust
- + Couple painful memories of deceased with pleasant ones

Spiritual

- + Use faith traditions (rituals, beliefs) as helpful
- + If helpful, make use of faith leaders
- + Use prayer to ask questions of meaning, purpose
- + Change time or place of worship
- + Attend worship with someone else
- + Direct big questions, feelings to That-Which-Is-Greater
- + Forgive the deceased for dying
- + Forgive yourself for inadequacies
- + Acknowledge loss of physical presence and anticipate spiritual presence
- + Make value choices based on your own mortality



Common, Normal Grief Reactions**FEELINGS**

Sadness
Anger
Guilt and self-reproach
Anxiety
Loneliness
Fatigue
Helplessness
Shock
Yearning
Emancipation
Relief
Numbness

PHYSICAL

Sleep disturbances
Appetite disturbances
Hollowness in stomach
Tightness in chest
Tightness in throat
Oversensitivity to noise
Depersonalization
Breathlessness, feeling
shortness of breath
Weakness in muscles
Lack of energy
Dry mouth

THINKING

Disbelief
Confusion
Preoccupation
Loss of memory
Absent-mindedness

BEHAVIORS

Social withdrawal
Dreams of deceased
Avoiding reminders of deceased
Searching and calling out
Sighing
Restless over-activity
Crying
Visiting places or carrying objects
Treasuring objects

SPIRITUAL

Disconnection
Questioning, unbelief
Searching for meaning
Revisiting faith tradition
Re-evaluating one's place in the world
Addressing one's own mortality
Worship as time of extreme feelings
Anger at God
Sense of deceased's presence

TASKS OF GRIEVING

- 1) To accept the reality of the loss.
- 2) To express grief's pain & emotion.
- 3) To adjust to an environment where the deceased is missing.
- 4) To redirect emotional energy to other meaningful outlets in our outer world.

Four Tasks of Mourning were identified by William Worden as one model for viewing the grief process. Looking at the grief process as tasks to be worked through can assist the grieving person with healing.

~From the ideas of William Worden (Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy)