

Grief 101 Tip Sheet

Based on the Work of Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt

Following are some themes in grief and tips about how to support yourself when you are grieving the death of a loved one:

1. Grief is a normal, natural and necessary part of human life - not an illness or a disease – and does not need to be “fixed” or “cured.”
2. Grief is the collection of thoughts, feelings and emotions that a person feels inwardly when s/he has experienced loss. The “work of mourning” is the outward expression of one’s thoughts, feelings and emotions in grief. This outward expression can be through sharing the story verbally with at least one trusted person ... and/or non-verbally through art, music, journaling, poetry, reading and/or rituals. Feel free to find your own unique way of processing your feelings.
3. Often described as an “emotional roller coaster” of feelings like sadness, fear, anger, helplessness, loneliness and guilt, the beginning dimensions of grief mostly feel like shock, numbness and disbelief. This “nature’s anaesthetic” wears off at different times for each person as the reality of the loss sets in. Begin to develop a circle of “grief buddies” to call when needed.
4. Grief requires “safe spaces” to process thoughts and feelings without judgment so that reconciliation and acceptance are possible. Begin to develop “safe spaces” within your circle of family and friends or professionally with grief counselors and/or bereavement support groups.
5. Grief is unique for each person; you are the “expert” of your grief experience. While others may offer advice, only you know how you are doing at all times.
6. There are no predictable, orderly stages to grief; there is no “right” or “wrong” way to grieve.
7. You may feel physically exhausted with changes in sleep and appetite. Get plenty of rest and see your doctor if needed.
8. Grief takes a person from an “old normal” for life to a “new normal” for life and there are no rewards for speed. Take as long as you need to process the loss. The goal of grief is NOT to “get over” your loved one’s death but rather to continue the relationship in memory. You are invited to embrace all memories of the past in order to move into your future.
9. Foundational to all grief work is self-care and compassion. Find your own way to care for yourself including meditation, prayer, ritual, yoga, reiki, Therapeutic Touch, massage, social life, etc.
10. When grief has an opportunity to be fully expressed, life can feel good again in a new way.

For further information or to access bereavement support:



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