

HOW WE CAN HELP OURSELVES IN TIMES OF GRIEF

- **Allow yourself time to grieve.** Grieving is a strengthening and healing process. The bigger the loss, the more its significance, the longer its healing time. Even a seemingly small loss can need quite some time to process. Give yourself the time and space you need.
- **You can grieve in your own way.** Grief is a very personal experience. There are no rules to follow. Do whatever works for you...talk, walk, take time out, pray, read books, listen to music, visit special places, laugh, cry...talk some more...go with it. Don't feel you have to fit in with the expectations of others. Follow your own instinctive recovery timetable. Grief teaches us a lot about ourselves we didn't know.
- **Expect emotional pain.** Know that the intensity and range of emotions experienced are normal, even when it doesn't feel like it! Trust and remind yourself often that it will ease in time, even when it feels like can't be true. What is true is that it takes time, and lots of it. Be realistic about this. Expect unexpected waves of grief, even after quite a long time. These are normal too. All sorts of little things can trigger an emotional response unexpectedly. Often what we feel are setbacks are another step forward to recovery.
- **Learn about grief.** Better understanding about what is happening to you can help. Spend time with someone who has experienced a similar loss. Read about grief. Recognise that grief is hard work - but working through it will mean recovery. Denying it will leave an open wound.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Look after yourself better than you ever have before. Rest, eat well, exercise, and treat yourself kindly. Go carefully. You may find yourself a bit forgetful or inclined to have small accidents. And remember that even when you are grieving you are still able to laugh and enjoy life at times - even for small moments. Savour that. This is that 'rainy day' you've been saving for.
- **Remember you are not alone.** Although sometimes it may feel like you are. Make the most of friends, neighbours, family, and community groups. Stay involved with people as best you can. Do be realistic, about the support they can offer. It may be limited for many fair reasons. Others can't take away your grief, and they may not always get things right. But often others will offer what they can manage and that can really help. Accept offers if you would like to. One day perhaps the roles will be reversed.
- **Expect some insensitivity from people.** That is part of the grief journey unfortunately. Some people have no idea how enormously loss and grief can impact someone. Strangely enough, sometimes the insensitive comments are ones we can laugh over later.
- **Draw on your beliefs.** This will mean different things to different people. Belief in God or a Higher Being reassures you that you don't have to bear it all alone, and that spiritual strength is there for you. You are loved - just as you are. Many people find prayer a tremendous help in times of grief.

The right help at the right time in the right way

- **Be honest about your needs.** You have nothing to gain from pretending to yourself and others that you are fine when really you aren't. Ask for help if you need to. See this as a positive thing and a way that you are being resourceful.
- **Consider seeing a grief counsellor.** You may find their specialist knowledge can help you understand your grief journey better. Many find this a reassuring and helpful choice.
- **Allow yourself times to talk about your loss.** Talk about special memories and about what you're going through. Find someone you have confidence in to do this with. Think also of doing this with others who have been affected by the same loss as you. Keep memories alive in ways that are meaningful to you. Perhaps keep photos around you or make a scrapbook.
- **Find something, however small, to look forward to.** Think of what could be positive for you as you contemplate your future. A meal with friends, a holiday, or a movie to see. Or plan to do something new, like tramping or learning a new skill.
- **Keep decision making to a minimum for a good while.** When emotions are in turmoil decisions may be impulsive and regretted later. If you feel stuck in your grief, ill or unable to cope in an ongoing way, seek professional help. Perhaps visit your doctor first. Grief can impact our bodies and minds enormously. Choose to get a bit of extra help along the way. It will be a tremendous investment in your recovery.

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