

This title is not meant to indicate that others in our lives do not help us through grief. We do need the help of relatives and friends, and may need the help of professional counseling. At the same time, it is important for us to make the effort to help ourselves.

Remember that grief takes a lot of energy. Treat yourself with the same care and affection that you would offer to a good friend in the same situation. Most of us are aware of "love your neighbor," but we forget the rest: "as you love yourself."

Not all suggestions will be helpful to everyone. Choose the ideas that appeal to you.

Be patient with yourself.

- Go gently. Don't rush too much. Your body, mind, and heart need energy to mend.
- Don't take on new tasks right away. Don't overstretch yourself. Keep decision making to a minimum.
- Don't compare yourself to others who are grieving. No two people, even from the same family, grieve the same. How one acts in public is not always the true "picture."
- Throw away ideas of a fixed period of mourning: one year and then you're "over it." This is fiction. Grief takes time, whatever time it takes.

Ask for and accept help.

- Don't be afraid to ask for help from those close to you when you need it. So much hurt and pain go unnoticed during grief because we don't want to bother anyone else with our problems. Wouldn't you want someone close to you to ask for help if they needed it? Our family and friends can't read our minds. Some relatives and friends will not be able to handle your grief. It is very important to find someone who cares, and understands with whom you may talk freely. Seek out an understanding friend, another grieving person, or a support group member.
- Accept help and support when offered. It's okay to need comforting. Often people wish to help and are waiting for you to tell them what you need. Tell them.
- Depression is common to those who grieve. Be careful not to totally withdraw from others. If your depression becomes severe or if you're considering suicide, get professional help immediately. If you need help, contact our local 24-hour hotline: Gryphon Place at 269.381.4357.
- Join a self-help group. They offer support, understanding, friendship, and hope.
- Give yourself some time to sort out your thoughts but don't build a wall around yourself in fear of being hurt again. It is important to live and enjoy the people in your life instead of distancing yourself from them.
- If grief is intense and prolonged, it may harm your physical and mental well-being. If it is necessary, seek out a counselor. Check to see if your health insurance covers the charges. It is important to take care of yourself.

- Feel what you feel. You don't choose your emotions, they choose you.
- It's okay to cry. Crying makes you feel better.
- It's okay to be angry. You may be angry with yourself, God, the person who died, others, or just angry in general. Don't hide it. Let it out (hit a pillow or punching bag, scream, swim, chop wood, exercise, etc.).
- Thinking you're going crazy is a very normal reaction. Most grieving people experience this. You are not losing your mind, only reacting to the death.
- The emotions of a survivor are often raw. It is important to let these feelings out. If you don't, they will come out some other time, some other way. That is certain. You don't suffer nearly as much from "getting too upset" as you will from being brave and keeping your honest emotions all locked up inside. Share your "falling to pieces" with supportive loved ones as often as you feel the need.
- You may have physical problems brought on by an emotional reaction. The physical problems are real; take steps to remedy them. Contact your physician if needed.