



What Do We Need During Grief?

Self-Acceptance. No one can tell you how to grieve. There is no specific time span during which healing takes place. Some people may vehemently protest that the death has occurred while others may quietly resign themselves to the reality. Some may refuse to think about the death at all; others may think of nothing else. Some may cry hysterically; others may remain outwardly impassive and emotionless.

The grief process is never the same for any two people. Don't compare yourself with others in similar situations.

Time. Time alone and time with those you trust and who will listen when you need to talk is helpful during this difficult period. It will take months and years of time to experience and understand the feelings that come with a loss.

Rest, Relaxation, Exercise, Nourishment, Diversion. You may need extra amounts of these things. Hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a "cause" to work for to help others – any of these may help. Grief is an exhausting process emotionally. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people and things you love.

Security. Try to reduce or find help for financial or other stresses in your life. Allow yourself to be close to those you trust. Getting back into routine helps. You may need to allow yourself to do things at your own pace.

Hope. You may find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, realizing that they have recovered, and seeing that time does help may give you hope that sometime in the future your grief will be less raw and painful.

Caring. Try to allow yourself to accept expressions of caring from others even when it may be difficult or awkward. Helping a friend or relative suffering the same loss may bring a feeling of closeness with that person.

Goals. For a while, it will seem that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful.

Something to look forward to like playing tennis with a friend, a movie night, or a trip may help you get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a rule of thumb. At first, don't be surprised if your enjoyment of these things isn't the same. This is normal. As time passes you may need to work on some longer-range goals to give some structure and direction to your life. You may need guidance or counseling to help with this.

Small Pleasures. Do not underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food – all are small steps toward regaining your enjoyment of life.

Tears. Crying can help alleviate emotional strain. This is true for men, women and children. Weeping is a natural way to ease anguish and release pain. Everyone needs some kind of outlet to discharge pent-up emotions.

Share your feelings with others. It is not enough to recognize your conflicting emotions, you should deal with them openly. An emotion that is denied is likely to resurface later. You only prolong the agony and delay the grief process. Find a good listener, a friend who will understand that your many feelings are normal responses to your grief.

Recall the Unforgettable Memories. Often bereaved individuals feel the solution to their grief is to attempt to "forget." However, it is good to recall the life of the deceased. By recognizing the wealth of the past, you can better understand why you are grieving.

Religious Affiliation. If you have been inactive in matters of faith, this might be the time to become involved again.

Permission to Backslide. Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair, or anger. This is often the up and down nature of grief. It may happen over and over because, as humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and meaning of the death at once.

Responses to Loss During the Grief Process

Grief is not a sign of weakness. It is, rather, a healthy and fitting response to a loss. Running away from grief postpones sorrow; clinging to grief prolongs pain. Neither approach leads to healing. Allow grief to have its way for a while; then, gradually and gently, you can release yourself from its grip. Each of us is different, but for most people grieving follows a pattern, and proceeds through phases. We do not all experience every phase. Nor do we move through grief at the same pace or with equal intensity. The following characteristics constitute the basic elements of the grief experience.

The Avoidance Phase: A period of shock, numbness, and disbelief usually follows the event of a loved one's death. One feels stunned, in a trance. Disorganization is normal. This phase can last only hours, but also may persist for weeks or months. It allows a person time to absorb what has happened and to begin to adjust.

The Confrontation Phase: As shock wears off, you begin to experience intense grief and your reactions to the loss are acute. Grief gives rise to a variety of emotions and mood swings may occur. When such feelings seem overwhelming, defer major decisions until they subside. It is painful when you truly accept that your loved one is gone. It hurts when you want to share an experience or story with your loved one, or must face a birthday or special occasion without your loved one. During this phase, you face the reality of the loss. The following are some of the many feelings you may experience during this painful period:

Panic/Anxiety: This emotion can range from a light sense of insecurity to a panic attack. The death of a loved one makes the future very uncertain. We might panic in the face of the unknown and the fear of "is this all there is." Panic prevents concentration and defers acceptance of the finality of death. It tempts us to run from life, avoid people and to refuse to try new things.

Guilt: Many people fault themselves in connection with a loved one's death. We have all made mistakes in our relationships and sincere regret is the best response to them. However, if guilt is consuming you, it can impact mental health and impede recovery from grief.

Anger: People in grief naturally ask "Why?", "Why him/her?", "Why now?", "Why like this?". Most of these questions have no answers. Frustration then causes us to feel resentment and anger. We want someone to blame: God, doctors, ourselves, even the person who died.

Depression: Depression is a common reaction to an important loss. A feeling of sadness that may lead to apathy and withdrawal, a loss of interest and motivation, pessimism, and irritability are just some of the symptoms of depression. Physical symptoms such as headaches, backaches, gastrointestinal problems or fatigue for which your physician has found no medical basis are also common. Some depression is a normal part of the grieving process. However, a feeling of deep, pervasive sadness and hopelessness that lasts for longer than two weeks or a preoccupation with thoughts of suicide, should be discussed with your physician or counselor immediately.

Aimlessness: At times in the grieving process, a kind of drifting occurs. Mourners find it difficult to return to familiar, even necessary, activities. They may prefer to day-dream about what was or fantasize about what might have been.

Fatigue: Many people experiencing grief report feelings of fatigue. These may be experienced as apathy, lack of energy, or an all encompassing tiredness unrelated to a full night's sleep.

Confusion or Absent-Minded Behavior: Many bereaved people have difficulty concentrating. As a result problems with memory, attention span, and disorientation are a frequent occurrence in grief.

Hope: In time, and with effort, hope grows. We can express emotions without embarrassment or apology. We can feel concern for and show interest in others. We can make decisions and assume responsibility for ourselves.

The Reestablishment Phase: The intense feelings of grief are diminishing. You are changed by the loss, but you are beginning to live with it and to cope with the new life that exists without your loved one. You begin to reinvest your emotional energy in relationships, objects and pursuits. The loss is put in a special place within you. The memories of your loved one remain an important part of your life as you move into your new world.

Grateful Family

Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo

As time passes and life around you begins to quiet, the memory of your loved one surrounds you. As memories warm your heart, your loved one is remembered. Their life mattered and their legacy will live on. Remembering our loved one – though so much for them – is also for ourselves. The ability to do so provides a path to healing.

At Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo (HPCB), we provide meaningful ways to pay tribute to the one you love while helping to further the

Creating a Legacy

HPCB mission through philanthropic support. From a named space or program – to a memorial plaque or paver – there is a myriad of opportunities to provide a permanent remembrance that will honor their memory for years to come.

We acknowledge and honor the importance of the life your loved one lived. We are here for you and we encourage you to stay connected.

To learn more about how you can memorialize your loved one, please contact the Hospice Foundation at (716) 686-8090.



Treasured Threads by Hospice Volunteers

Have you or your child recently experienced the death of a loved one? Do you have clothing or fabric that reminds you of how special that person was in your life?

Specialized Hospice Volunteers are available to piece together your “Treasured Threads” to create a tangible lasting memory. Some ideas that have been created are pillows and teddy bears, made with your loved one’s clothing. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Sue Eckel, Volunteer Coordinator, at (716) 989-2063 or seckel@palliativecare.org.

**Please allow 6-9 months for completion.*





HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE

B U F F A L O

Bereavement Services

150 Bennett Road
Buffalo, NY 14227

Return Service Requested

Hospice Bereavement Support Groups

Join others in a safe and supportive environment where you can:

- **Share your story**
- **Connect with others grieving**
- **Express emotions**
- **Learn more about grief and loss**
- **Discover new coping strategies**

- Participation is free and open to local hospice families.
- Groups meet monthly and are facilitated by licensed grief professionals.
- Registration is required.

Call (716) 836-6460 or email griefsupport@palliativecare.org for more information, or to register.

Wilson Support Center • 150 Bennett Road • Buffalo, NY 14227

**For additional information and helpful resources,
visit our website at WilsonSupportCenter.org**