



After the First Year, Then What?

The first year of bereavement brings pain, disbelief, the agony of reality, and many other deep emotions. You may have never experienced such feelings to this degree. Subsequent years are usually not quite as pain-filled, yet you may feel better, you may still be in significant distress. It helps to understand this next period and to learn some skills for coping. It is most helpful if you lessen your expectations on yourself, continue to work on your grief, and hold on to hope. Remember, grief is different for everyone. Your experience is unique. Everyone grieves differently, so don't compare yourself to others or place yourself on a timetable. If there were concurrent stressors in the first year of grief, some say that the second year can be more difficult. Some of the following suggestions/observations may help you:

- Be kind and forgiving to yourself; don't become critical just because you don't meet others' expectations.
- A different level of reality may hit you. You no longer deny the death, but you now face reality and its long term implications.
- It is vital to find a friend or professional with whom you can talk. This is one significant factor that prevents people from sliding into depression.
- Don't expect too much of your family. They too have their hands full with grief.
- It may be the time to develop some new life patterns. If your previous style of grieving has not been helpful, you must be willing to try new approaches. These can include finding friends to talk with, becoming involved in new or once loved activities, and developing coping skills, so as not to get stuck in your grief.
- Don't ignore or minimize your feelings. What you feel is valid and needs to be fully expressed.
- Other events in your life may be complicating your grief (trouble with work, family members or friends). Realize that this happens to many people and makes it difficult to deal with one issue at a time.
- You may or may not cry as often as you did at first. When you do cry, realize it is therapeutic. Don't fight the tears.
- Insufficient sleep affects many bereaved people. Moving your body helps to foster relaxation and improve sleep. It may also be helpful to reduce your intake of caffeine and alcohol.
- Try to find balance in your life between work and recreation including exercise, hobbies, and socialization.
- You often hear "Time will heal." Yes, time does soften the hurt a bit, especially if it is spent constructively. Time well spent can include reading, talking, struggling with grief phases and asking for help when needed, being gentle with yourself, lowering your expectations, and spending pleasant times with family and friends.
- Don't be alarmed if depression returns or appears for the first time. Depression and its recurrence are normal and can be managed.
- Pride can be one of the greatest stumbling blocks. You may think that you should be doing much better or not want to acknowledge that you need help.
- If you have guilty feelings, it is best to acknowledge them, not suppress them. Only you will be able to say to yourself, "I did the best that I could at the time with what I knew."
- Friends or family may give you messages such as "You should be over it by now" and "Get on with living." Such statements may lead you to feel misunderstood or abandoned. Find others to talk with who understand.

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- Loneliness may seem to engulf you as you look ahead to a life without your loved one. Find new friends and connect with friends from the past.
- If the question “Why did my loved one die?” is bothering you, ask it again and again until you can come to terms with it. You may never know why. It may remain a mystery that you choose to let go of when you are ready.
- Realize that anger may be directed at yourself, your faith, the person who died, or those in the medical field who did not seem to understand or help. Acknowledging

your anger is the first step in releasing its power over you.

- Consider that even though you are struggling with grief; you would rather have had the time with your loved one, than to avoid the pain and not have had him/her in your life at all.
- So many of us have been brought up to be independent. We find it difficult to ask for help. Reaching out for help from caring people can make a big difference in working through your grief.

- Set realistic goals for the future. Pinpoint your most acute concerns. Think of all the possible solutions. Choose one solution at a time and take steps forward to implement it.

***Adapted from Hope for Bereaved
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Syracuse, NY 14219***

How Do I Know I'm Getting Better?



Although everyone's grief experience is unique, there are ways to measure progress.

Some signs that you are getting better include:

- There is a different kind of sadness, a change from a bitter sadness to a sweet one.
- You are planning for the future by finding rewarding things to do and people to invest your time in.
- You can talk about your loss without feeling hopeless or helpless. You have memories to share.
- You give yourself permission to “take a break” from grief, to enjoy other aspects of life, and you don't see this as a betrayal to the person who died.

- Appetite and sleep patterns may be getting back to normal.
- The times are more frequent when you feel free from the heaviness of loss and you can enjoy pleasure without guilt.
- You feel you are relating to others again.

Your loss will always be a part of you, it makes you the person you are today and the person you will be in the future. Now and again you will be caught up in a resurgence of feelings of grief. This will happen with decreasing frequency as time goes on, but may never cease entirely.

Honoring the Memory of Your Loved One

Over the past year, your life may have temporarily lost much of its purpose and meaning as a result of the loss of your loved one. As time passes, you may start to get a better grasp on your identity and feel more secure. Perhaps you have made new friends or become involved in new activities. Your sense of humor may have returned, along with the ability to relax and have fun. Enjoying life again does not make you disloyal to your loved one or their memory. Feeling better does not lessen the love you have for the person who died. The times when you run across that favorite picture, hear that old tune, or smell that familiar fragrance are opportunities to remember your loved one with fondness.

Although there may be progress in some or all of these areas, there are still days when it seems as though their death was just yesterday. Grief accompanies all the major events in life. During special days of the year and special times in your life, you may miss having your loved one at your side. Those times will continue to bring back the pain and sorrow

of your loss. This aspect of grief happens to everyone and is a normal part of the grieving experience. You will learn how to anticipate these special days and what you need to manage emotions as they resurface. Many people use various rituals that are personal and intentional in their reconnection to their loved one.

The following are ways you can honor the memory of your loved one:

- Visit the cemetery or place of remembrance and bring along a flower, note or object that represents your loved one.
- Light a candle in honor of you loved one. This can be done in your home or place of worship.
- Plant a tree or perennial flowers and watch them grow year after year.
- Plan a biodegradable balloon release. Each family member could have their own balloon or release a group of balloons. You could also write a short note to your loved one and attach it to your balloon.



- Write a letter to your loved one telling them what you miss about him/her, also note your accomplishments and what has occurred during the past year.
- Watch home videos or dedicate time to look through photo albums.
- Visit a place where your loved one enjoyed spending time or where many good memories were shared.
- Spend time with family members or friends and share memories or stories about your loved one.

Support Groups Available

The following support groups are offered by Wilson Support Center. All services are provided at **150 Bennett Road, Buffalo NY 14227.**

- Community Bereavement Group
- Suicide Bereavement Group
- Adolescent Suicide Support Group
- Storm Clouds & Rainbows
- Widows and Widowers
- After a Parent Dies
- Tiniest Angels

To register for our groups or for more information about educational presentations and other special events, please call (716) 836-6460 or visit our website at WilsonSupportCenter.org.





HOSPICE &
PALLIATIVE CARE

B U F F A L O

Bereavement Services

150 Bennett Road
Buffalo, NY 14227

Return Service Requested

Thank you for reading The Grief Journal. This is the last issue you will receive.
If you would like to speak with a Bereavement Team Member, please call (716) 836-6460.

Second Year Hospice Bereavement Support Group

Support groups may be a lifeline for many of us after the death of our loved one. Support groups can offer a safe, non-threatening place to share our emotions and concerns. They provide an opportunity to meet other people who have had similar experiences and to learn coping skills. **The Second Year Hospice Bereavement Support Group is for people who have lost a loved one in Hospice Care and are in the second year of their grief journey.**

There is no fee required for this group.

Please call (716) 836-6460 or email griefsupport@palliativecare.org to register.

Wilson Support Center
150 Bennett Road, Buffalo, NY 14227

Thank you for utilizing Hospice Bereavement services.
Please call us at (716) 836-6460 or email griefsupport@palliativecare.org
if we can be of assistance.