

Bereavement news for people living with grief



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How do you sustain G-force when you are grieving?

By Kathleen VanNeste-Kortebein, MS, LPC

Throughout your lifetime you are graced by the presence of individuals who play different roles in your life. They may be family, friends, or perhaps a stranger who offered a kind word that left an indelible mark on your soul. You feel the force of acceleration as one champions you on. When the voice of logic speaks and brings you back to reality, you may decelerate for a time. The one who offers to hug and hold you until the tears begin to slow down helps you to resist the gravitational pull of grief. In the end, the most helpful individual may be the one who just rides beside you, whatever the weather, with constant momentum. In our lifetime, we will experience the death of someone we love. Regardless of the circumstance, whether through illness, accident or trauma, we will ride the roller coaster of emotion through the course of our grief journey. The questions remain: How will we constructively navigate the process of grief and how will we remember our loved ones if we move beyond the dueling forces of grief

Accept and value yourself. You will walk forward through your grief based on your personality and backstory. Grief is natural and universal, but there is no set mathematical formula or competition to a finish line. Advocate and be courageous! Extend the same love and respect to yourself

that you extended to your loved one. Acceptance of self is an important step toward healing in your grief.

Your feelings are normal. Are you riding a roller coaster or a Ferris wheel? Do you feel that the only way you will survive is if you have tunnel vision? You have a right to feel sadness, fear, despair, confusion, anger, guilt, numbness, or even relief and happiness. Your emotional thermometer may go up and down at different times and occasions. Family celebrations, holidays, favorite places, songs, scents, objects, or daily routines may send you into a grief-burst. In the moment, it may seem that the crushing sorrow will never subside, but those gripping emotions release and beautiful memories will “pop-up”. With each turn of events, you will be reminded of the presence of your loved one and your ability to recover will take place faster.

Accept a change in routine. Following the death of a loved one, a person may feel quite different. You may experience an inability to concentrate for a long period of time and you may also lose your normal appetite. Your desire to work or be social may plummet. The carnival of life may hold less attraction. On the other hand, you may want to embrace every opportunity to become more involved in your work,

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Emotional issues after a loss

Adapted from writings of Jim Miller, author of *What will help me: 12 things to remember when you've suffered a loss* and *How can i help?*

Many people do not know what to expect when a Loved One passes away. In many places today, the process of grieving is not well understood. As a result, griever and their grieving behavior are often not accepted and supported in the way they deserve to be. The following are various questions the bereaved and their loved one's ask.

1. How long does grief last?

When will it be over? Unfortunately, there is no simple and clear answer. There are too many variables to predict with any accuracy how long someone will be in grief. Every griever is unique, as measured by their personality, their coping behaviors, their previous experiences with grief, as well as, their relationship with the one who died. Additional factors which influence grief are one's religious faith, current support system (or lack there of), and the ability to participate in funeral rituals. Grief will last as long as it is suppose to. You will walk through grief, but never completely get over it. For some people it may be a matter of a few months, and for others measured in years based on the seriousness, expectation of death, or traumatic nature of the death. There may also be a sense in which certain grief may never end, depending on your age or the extent of your loss.

2. Do all people grieve alike?

No, there is no prescribed way to grieve. Many cry and some do not. Many feel very sad and want to talk about it. Others want to deal with it more on their own. Most people report that their grief comes and goes unpredictably, almost like a roller coaster. But not everyone reports that. Some people feel worse early on, while others find that their most difficult times come months or sometimes even years afterwards.

3. What are the signs of grieving?

There are many possible feelings one might have. Sadness, anxiety, anger, guilt, tiredness, helplessness, and loneliness are often reported. Some people feel shame, others feel relief. There are also certain physical sensations one might have: tightness in the chest or throat, pain in the heart area, heart palpitations, dizziness, nausea, trembling. People in grief sometimes don't sleep well, or they sleep too much. The same goes for their eating habits -- they eat too little, or too much, or they eat inappropriately. They may have unusual dreams or nightmares, be absent-minded, withdraw socially, or engage in restless over-activity. All of these feelings and behaviors are normal during grief.

4. Is it normal to feel like you're going crazy during grief?

That's one of the most normal feelings of all. A time of grief is an unusual time, even a "crazy" time, in one's life. In a crazy period it can make perfect sense to act a little crazy

oneself. Many people, perhaps the majority, wonder if this is happening to them at one time or another in their grieving process. The best thing to do is to remember that one is in good company with many others. "The crazies" will pass.

5. Do men and women grieve differently?

It often seems so. The stereotype is that women are more expressive with their feelings and men are more stoic. Women, it is said, give in to their grief more and men fight it off. Women, the theory holds, seek more support from others and men tend to go it alone. Those are all stereotypes that sometimes fit and sometimes don't. It's important to remember that every person has both masculine and feminine elements.

So the truth is probably closer to this: some people are more quiet and solitary in their grief and some are more expressive and emotional. Some prefer to work through their grief by actively asserting themselves through various actions, while others are more comfortable giving in to their grief and allowing it to move through them. It's not a matter of men being one way and women being another. It's a matter of different people being comfortable expressing their grief in different ways, whether they're men or women.

6. Is it morbid to talk about the Loved One who has died?

Not at all. The Loved One who has died is still a part of the lives of those who have survived. There is still a relationship. That relationship cannot evolve in the way it once did but it can still be a source of meaning and strength. Remembering the Loved One who died and speaking their name is a healthy way of developing a new kind of bond -- one of the heart and the soul rather than of the body.



Chipping away

By Margaret Brownley

After Michelangelo had chipped away at an eighteen-foot-high block of marble and created his famous statue of David, he was asked how he had created so much beauty from a mere block of marble. He reportedly replied that he simply chipped away everything that didn't look like David.

Grief is a marble stone that must be chipped away, little by little, day by day. With the same persistence as a sculptor, we must chip away anything that doesn't look like healing. We must chisel away the anger, scrape away the pain, and sand away the loneliness. Work hard enough and the block eventually grows rounder, smoother, and turns into a more pleasing and manageable form. New life emerges; a work of art.

What art is trapped in the stone of your grief? Is it a more authentic self or a stronger faith? Maybe it is a more creative soul or could it be a more compassionate spirit?

Sometimes it's memories we uncover; previously forgotten moments that make us smile or move us to loving tears.

Sometimes, we find another dimension of a loved one, another picture of their presence in our lives.

Keep chipping away, piece by piece, and teardrop by teardrop – grief can make master sculptors of us all.

Margaret Brownley is the author of *Grieving God's Way*.

How do you sustain G-force

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preoccupy your mind and diffuse nervous energy to avoid some of the agonizingly repetitive feelings associated with loss.

Construct a hopeful future

Be kind to yourself. Adjust your self-imposed expectations regarding your ability and energy level to meet your current demands. Be cautious about taking on new projects too soon or forcing yourself to grieve in a way that pushes you through your grief only to learn later you derailed yourself and will need to re-grieve.

Create ways of remembering your loved one. Rituals may help you frame the positive aspects of your relationship and life itself. Journal writing, prayer, meditation, singing, walking, and visiting can be an outlet to share memories and honor your loved one.

Center yourself spiritually. What goals have you set for yourself? How did your loved one help you become the best version of yourself? How can you pay this gift forward and contribute to the well-being of others? For those with Faith, avail yourself of your spiritual gifts and faith family for support.

Envision a hopeful future. Open yourself up to the generosity of others. Allow them to be with you in this season of your life. Remain physically active and sensitive to the beauty of life around you. Be convicted that there is a plan and purpose for your life going forward. Breathe in the love that you shared with your loved one, let it be your platform, lower the lap bar, take the next ride of your life.

*Sometimes, I just look up, smile and say
"I know that was you".*



2023 bereavement support groups

Join the Henry Ford Hospice bereavement teams in virtual support groups on the following days of each month:

2nd Wednesday of the month 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Monthly:

1/11, 2/8, 3/8, 6/14.

Spring series:

4/12, 4/19, 4/26, 5/3, 5/10, 5/17

3rd Tuesday of the month 1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Monthly:

1/17, 2/21, 3/21, 6/20.

Spring series:

4/18, 4/25, 5/2, 5/9, 5/16, 5/23

4th Thursday of the month 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Monthly:

1/26, 2/23, 3/23, 6/22.

Spring series:

4/27, 5/4, 5/11, 5/18, 5/25, 6/1

SandCastles Children's Grief Support Program

Pre-registration is required. To register, please call:
313.771.7005

St. Clair Shores, Livonia, Clinton Twp., Rochester, Detroit
Southfield, and West Bloomfield

**Registration is required
for all support groups
and space is limited.**

**To register, call:
586.276.9570**

*Note: Six week series are a
day and time commitment of
six consecutive weeks.*

You will need to provide your
name, contact number, and
email address so we may
forward the invitation and
provide further instructions.

For information regarding any
of the listed support groups or
bereavement services offered
by Henry Ford Hospice, please
call the Henry Ford Hospice
bereavement team
at 586.276.9570.

Henry Ford provides qualified
interpreters and other aids and
services for the deaf and hard of
hearing at no cost.

To request assistance, call Henry
Ford Bereavement Services at
586.276.9570.

If possible, please notify us three
days in advance of the event.