



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

Living with Grief: How Can You Help Yourself?

When someone you love dies, your world changes forever. You must go on living and adjust to a world without the physical presence of your loved one. It is important to treat yourself with compassion as you go through the grieving process.

Here are some ways to care for yourself at this difficult time.

Remember that your way of grieving is yours alone. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Everyone affected by your loved one's death will grieve in his or her own way. Other members of your family may have ways of grieving that differ from yours. Many factors affect how you grieve, such as your relationship with the person who has died, your family responsibilities, and how your loved one's death affects your plans for the future.



Honor your feelings. You can expect to have many emotional ups and downs as you grieve. Grief is often described as an emotional roller coaster. As you think about your loved one, and as your life goes on without him or her, many reactions may emerge. Rest assured that this is normal. Allow yourself to feel what you feel without judging your emotions.

Give yourself special time to think about your loved one. Grief can appear when you least expect it and be overwhelming. One strategy that may help is to set aside special times to think about your loved one. By doing this, you may find that your feelings of grief are less likely to disrupt your daily routines.

Take care of your health. Grief can leave you feeling tired and weak. Focusing on your own needs is an important part of grief. It is important to get plenty of rest, eat regularly, and stay active. Consider seeing your family doctor for a check-up. He or she may be able to help you understand and cope with the physical effects of grief.

Tell others how to help you. Friends, family members, neighbors, co-workers, and others who know you want to find ways to help. Let them assist with practical tasks that you may find hard to manage on your own. For example, ask for help with making phone calls, preparing meals, picking up your children from school, and so on.

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Become informed. Many books and web sites offer information about coping with grief and recovering from the loss of a loved one. You may find it helpful to read what others have written about these experiences.

Wait to make major life-changing decisions. While you are grieving, it is hard to bring clear judgment to major life decisions. If you can, wait to make these kinds of decisions until your feelings of grief are less intense.

Plan ahead for how to cope on special days. Think about how you would like to honor your loved one on a birthday, anniversary or holiday. Give yourself permission to try something new. Be aware that the dread you may feel while thinking about upcoming special days may be harder to cope with than the days themselves.

Seek support. Talk with a therapist or counselor who understands the special needs of people who are grieving. This may help you find new ways of coping with your grief. Attending a support group with others who have lost a loved one can help you feel less alone. It can also give you a safe place to talk with people who understand what you are going through. CancerCare offers free individual and group counseling for people who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

CancerCare Can Help

CancerCare's professional oncology social workers are available to help you cope with the loss of a loved one to cancer. We provide free individual counseling and support groups over the telephone, online and in person. CancerCare also offers practical help and referrals to other resources. For more information, call **1-800-813-HOPE (4673)** or visit www.cancercares.org.



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