

Coping with the Death of a Loved One

Losing someone you love can cause seemingly unbearable pain. The death will be tough, and it does get easier with time. If you are finding it difficult to accept a loss, you can learn ways to cope and move on without forgetting how much your loved one meant to you.

What You May Experience Immediately After a Loss

- The depth of hurt will depend on how close you were with the deceased.
- Sometimes the emotion is so unfamiliar and strong that when you initially learn of the news, all you feel is numbness.
- It can consume your thoughts leaving you unable to make decisions or function normally.
- Loss can not only affect you emotionally, but also physically. You may feel nauseous and experience headaches and vomiting.

Once the initial shock and adjustment has passed and your daily routines pick back up, you are likely to experience the loss in a different way.

- Depending on the person's past involvement in your life, you may feel the absence of the person more strongly, and may feel that your life will never be the same again.
- You may want to be alone because you think no one understands.
- You may question if there was anything you could have done to make things different.

If you have experienced all or some of these feelings, they are all part of the normal grieving process. Learning to cope with these emotions, while difficult, can help you work through the loss and come out stronger in the end.

Various Kinds of Loss

Any death of a loved one is difficult, but research shows that sudden, tragic deaths and deaths of young people often are the hardest to accept. When a child dies, parents often feel like they can't go on. The pain can be so intense that parents may wish they could give their own life so the child may live. The child's siblings may also be deeply affected by this loss.

The death of a spouse is also especially difficult to accept. Routines that were once normal in a partnership, like kissing goodnight or saying goodbye before going off to work, are now nonexistent. The living spouse may have extreme depression while trying to cope with the loss.

Older adults may have a very difficult time dealing with death, as they are confronted with mortality more frequently. Older adults may become depressed by experiencing so much loss in their friends and family.

Finding Ways to Cope

Talk, talk, talk, no matter how hard it is to do so. Others who also loved the deceased make great listeners and people to listen to. You can share stories and talk about how much you miss and loved the person with these friends or family members. Consider reading books about grief, talking to a counselor or clergy member, or joining a support group. Professional therapists are trained to help people who are dealing with grief and get to a place where they can manage their emotions and function in their daily lives. If you feel suicidal or in complete despair or depression, seek professional help immediately.

You need to take time to grieve and face your grief. If you don't, it will cause great emotional distress later. Your life could become out of control, or you could indulge in alcohol, drugs, overeating or other negative habits in order to mask the pain your grief is causing. By not facing the death, it will cause more problems in the long-run, so try to address these feelings now.

Employee Assistance & Wellness Programs
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Corporate Address: 10367 West Centennial Road | Littleton CO 80127
Toll-Free: 800-873-7138 | Local: 303-832-1068 | Fax: 303-832-9701

Helping the Survivor Cope

If you find yourself in the position of helping someone cope with loss, use the following tips:

- Listen. Try to say little. When you do speak, offer comfort, not clichés.
- Be there for support in the days, weeks, months, or even years after the loss.
- Include the survivor in holidays.
- Send a thoughtful card or flower or call the survivor on the anniversary of the loss.
- Accept the survivor's feelings, and attempt to show him or her love and compassion.

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