

## Seven Important Reminders for Those Who Are Grieving

It's a sad commentary on our modern culture that most of us grow up without any education or modeling for how to handle grief. It's as if people are afraid to deal with this inevitable part of human life. With a lack of clear guidelines for dealing with loss, we often stumble through it without any real healing.

Grief that is unattended and denied does not go away. It just goes deeper within us. Each subsequent loss that remains unattended stacks up on top of the ones before it.

Sometimes the pain of all our unhealed grief will eventually burst out of us in inappropriate responses to others and injurious behavior toward ourselves. The buildup of inner pain and stifled emotion can be greatly relieved by knowing how to take care of yourself from the beginning.

**Here are seven important reminders of what to look for as you process grief. They give specific ideas for how to attend to your life in a more thoughtful, caring way as you grieve and learn to integrate the loss you have suffered.**

1. **Recognize that grief is very physical!** Your body may need more rest than usual, your sleep patterns can be affected, you may be more susceptible to illness, and you may feel exhausted for no apparent reason. This is a time to take very good care of yourself! Drink plenty of water, rest whenever you feel the need, exercise lightly, and try to eat a balanced diet.
2. **Do not try to push yourself quickly through your grief.** Grieving is a *process*, and you can't force your way through this. Resist the urge to predict how long it should take you to deal with the pain of your loss. Bereavement cannot be predicted by a schedule of days or weeks or even years. Everything in life takes as long as it needs to take.

3. **Be compassionate with yourself and forgiving toward others.** Be aware that in the grieving process you can often feel quite raw; you may be unusually sensitive and more vulnerable to what other people say and do around you. Take care of yourself first, walk away if you feel threatened by something, and avoid arguing over anything.
4. **Finding someone to talk with about your loss is very important.** The sharing of memories and the verbalization of all feelings, especially any sense of anger, guilt, or regret is very healing. Speaking about your loved one is a way of honoring his/her life and it can offer a path to closure on things that may have been left unsaid between you.
5. **Grief can make you feel disconnected from your usual self.** You may feel as if you're walking through a thick fog at times. You may find it difficult to stay focused and make decisions. On the other hand, you may feel compelled to take impulsive actions without thinking things through. Especially in the early stages of grief, delay decisions that can wait till later or delegate them to someone you trust.
6. **Keep your life as simple as possible.** Make no demands of yourself for a while. Be gently reasonable in your expectations of both yourself and others. Take all the time you need to walk through this period of bereavement. Honor it as a sacred passage in your life.
7. **Know that you are not alone and that you will make it through this.** Comfort and companionship are available to you through the caring of others, the sharing of thoughts, feelings, and memories, and through the Love of God ever around you. Do something each day that soothes your soul, heals your heart, and brings a little light into the shadows of your grief.