

WHAT WE NEED DURING GRIEF

TIME: Time alone; and time with others whom you trust and who will listen when you need to talk. Months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings that go along with loss.

REST: Relaxation - Exercise - Nourishment - Diversion. You may need extra amounts of things you needed before. Hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a "cause" to work for - any of these may give you a lift. Grief is an exhausting process emotionally. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people and the things you love.

SECURITY: Try to reduce or find help for financial or other stresses in your life. Allow yourself to be close to those you trust. Getting back into routine helps. You may need to allow yourself to do things at your own pace.

HOPE: You may find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered and time does help, may give you hope that sometime in the future your grief will be less raw and painful. Joining a grief support group may be helpful.

CARING: You need acceptance and caring throughout the grief period. Try to allow yourself to accept the expressions of caring from others, even though they may be uneasy and awkward. If you lack support, make finding it your first goal. Helping a friend or close relative also suffering the same loss may bring a feeling of closeness with that person.

GOALS: For a while, it will seem that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like playing tennis with a friend next week, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month, helps you get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a rule of thumb. At first, don't be surprised if your enjoyment of these things isn't the same. This is normal. As time passes you may need to work on some longer range goals to give some structure and direction to your life. Involve yourself in meaningful activity. You may need guidance or counseling to help with this.

SMALL PLEASURES: Do not underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures as you are ready. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food - all are small steps toward regaining your pleasure in life itself. Don't be afraid to have fun - laughter is good medicine.

PERMISSION TO BACKSLIDE: Sometimes after a period of feeling good, we find ourselves back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair, or anger. This is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. It happens because as humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and the meaning of death at once. So, we let it in a little at a time.