

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 sometimes years of time to feel and understand the feelings that go along with loss.

CARING: Try to allow yourself to accept the expressions of caring from others even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative – suffering the same loss may bring a feeling of closeness with that person.

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 a routine helps. Do things at your own pace.

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 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.

REST, RELAXATION, EXERCISE, NOURISHMENT, DIVERSION: You may need extra amounts of things you needed before. Hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a project or “cause” to work for to help others – any of these may give you a lift. Grief is an emotionally and physically exhausting process. You need to replenish yourself. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people you love.

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

SMALL PLEASURES: Do not underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food – all are small steps toward regaining your pleasure in life itself.

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 want work on longer-range goals to give some structure and direction to your life; guidance or counseling can be helpful.

BE AWARE OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE: The use of drugs, alcohol, an even prescription medications may prolong and delay the necessary process of grieving. We cannot prevent or cure grief. The only way out is through the grief process.

PERMISSION TO CHANGE YOUR MIND: Grieving can shake you up inside. You may find yourself having trouble concentrating, constantly reevaluating your priorities, or never being quite sure what you want. Let people know in advance that you may decide to change your plans.