

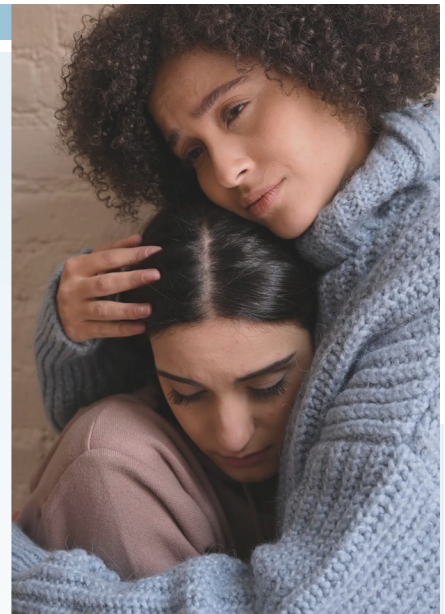
Suggestions for Helping Yourself Through

Be Patient With Yourself

- Go gently. Don't rush too much. Your body, mind, and heart need energy to mend.
- Don't take on new responsibilities right away. Don't overextend yourself. Keep decision making at a minimum.
- Surround yourself as much as possible with people you enjoy being around. Avoid those who drain your energy.
- Don't compare your grief to others. It may seem that you aren't adjusting as well as they are, but in reality, you don't know what's behind their public façade. Also keep in mind that grief hits us all at different moments. What is a difficult time for one person may not be for another.
- Throw away notions of a fixed period of mourning. This is fiction. Grief takes time. Be sure you allow for whatever time it takes.

Ask For and Accept Help

- Don't be afraid to ask for help from those close to you when you need it. So much hurt and pain goes unrecognized during grief because we don't want to bother anyone else with our problems. Wouldn't you want someone close to you to ask for help if they needed it? Our family and friends can't read our minds. Some relatives and friends will not be able to handle grief. It is very important to find someone who cares and understands with whom you may talk freely. Seek out an understanding friend, another bereaved person, or a support group.
- Accept help and support when they are offered. It's okay to need comforting. It's okay to ask for help with the daily tasks of life that you find yourself without time or energy for. Often, people wait to be told when you're ready to talk or if you need anything. Tell them.
- Pray to the person who has died.
- If you are troubled and need help, contact your local 24-hour hotline.
- Join a self-help grief support group for understanding, friendship, and hope.
- Give yourself time to sort out your thoughts but don't distance yourself from those who love you.
- If grief is intense and prolonged, it may harm your physical and mental well-being. If it is necessary, seek a competent counselor. It is important to take care of yourself. Hospice offers bereavement counseling at no charge.



The support we often receive from our families, friends, and communities when we experience the death of a loved one is certainly very needed and helpful. However, we also need to know how to help ourselves through the grieving process.

In James E. Miller's book, he says, "There is one person who can take care of you better than anyone, and that's you."

Remember that grief takes a lot of energy. Treat yourself with the same care and affection you would offer a good friend in the same situation. Most of us are aware of "Love your neighbor" – we forget the part – "as you love yourself." All suggestions will not be helpful to everyone. Grief has its unique sides. The ways that you grieve will suit your personality.

Suggestions continued

Be Good To Yourself

It is up to you to set a pace that works for you at this time. Try to honor what feels right to you. Think about whether you are jumping back to work and other duties as a means to escape or whether you truly feel ready to be there. If you have to go back to work before you feel ready, take things as slowly as possible. Keep in mind that you may need respites from the stress you are feeling. Follow these tips to nurture yourself:

- Keep a journal. It is a good way to understand what you are feeling and thinking.
- Try to get adequate rest. Avoid caffeine in coffee, teas, and soft drinks.
- Good nutrition is important even though you may lose your appetite temporarily.
- Many books have been written on the subject of grief and loss. Reading may help you better understand what you are going through. Look for books that are specific to the type of loss that you have experienced or that explore the feelings you are experiencing.
- Spending time in nature may allow you to set your internal clock to a pace that nurtures you.
- Finding things to do with your hands may help calm your mind.
- Meditation, yoga, and various breathing techniques can help you take little breaks throughout the day to lower your stress levels and reset your frame of mind.

*Grief takes time. Do not have unrealistic expectations of yourself.
Remember, it will get better. Hold on to HOPE!
You will have good days ahead.*

- Be good to yourself: take a hot bath, read a book, go see a movie, etc.
- Moderate exercise (walking, swimming, etc.) helps release anger and stress while keeping your body and mind strong and healthy.
- It does not have to get done all at once. If it seems like there are just too many things to take care of, make a list and prioritize the tasks you have to complete, then commit to working on one thing at a time. Focus only on the present task and not what you will be doing in an hour or next week. If there are too many pressing deadlines, ask a trusted friend for help. Often, people are waiting to hear how they can be of help.
- As time goes by, try spending time doing some of your favorite activities. It may be difficult at first but the act of a familiar activity may brighten your day.
- On the other hand, try making a dish that you've never made before or read a book by a new author. Though it is important to take changes slowly, a little something new might be refreshing.
- Plan things which you can look forward – a trip, visit, or lunch with a special friend. Start today to build memories for tomorrow.
- As you feel ready, become involved in helping others. It helps you feel good about yourself.
- Do something you have always wanted to do: take a class, go on a trip, etc.
- Put balance in your life: work, play, read, rest, and pray.



Suggestions continued

Lean Into the Pain

- Lean into the pain. It cannot be outrun. You can't go around it, over it, or under it. You must go through it and feel the full force of the pain to survive. Be careful not to get stuck at some phase. Keep working on your grief.
- Save time to grieve and time to face the grief. Don't throw yourself into your work or other activities that leave you no time for grieving.
- In a time of severe grief, be extremely careful with the use of either alcohol or prescription drugs. Tranquilizers don't end the pain, they only mask it. This may lead to further withdrawal, loneliness, and even addiction.
- Be determined to work through your grief.

Accept Your Feelings

- It's okay to cry. Crying makes you feel better.
- It's okay to be angry. You may be angry with yourself, God, the person who died, others, or just angry in general. Don't push it down. Let it out (hit a pillow or punching bag, scream, exercise, chop wood, etc.).
- Thinking you are crazy is a normal reaction. Many grieving people experience this thought. You are not losing your mind, only reacting to the death.
- Depression is common to those in grief. Be careful not to totally withdraw yourself from others. If your depression becomes severe or you are considering suicide, get professional help immediately.
- The emotions of a survivor are often raw. It is important to let these feelings out. If you don't, they will come out some other time, some other way. This is certain. You won't suffer nearly as much from "getting too upset" as you will from being brave and keeping your honest emotions all locked up inside.

Suggestions to Aid Sleep

Try not to become overly upset about not sleeping – this just perpetuates your inability to sleep. Have confidence that eventually, you will sleep again.

Go to bed and get up roughly the same time every day, including weekends. A regular routine keeps your inner clock set. If you always awaken early, it may help to go to bed earlier.

Do not try to force sleep. If you cannot fall asleep after 30 minutes, get up and do something peaceful, like knitting or reading. Then go back to bed. Repeat if necessary.

Take a warm bath and/or drink warm milk before going to bed. Warmth is soothing and milk contains an amino acid that helps you to sleep. Even cold milk may help.

Take time to unwind. Do not go to bed after a flurry of physical or mental activity.

Read light books so that the last thing you are thinking about is the book instead of your grief and worry – this helps to get your mind off your insomnia.

Learn some kind of relaxation technique, such as meditation.

Avoid all soft drinks, coffee, tea (hot or cold), cocoa, chocolate, and other things that contain caffeine. Instead, drink herbal tea, decaffeinated coffee, or juices. Carry your own tea bags.

Be aware that sleeping pills, alcohol, and cigarettes may cause insomnia. Alcohol or sleeping pills may help you get to sleep, but as soon as they are out of your systems, you will wake up.

*When the world says, "Give up,"
Hope whispers, "Try it one more time."*

-Unknown

Suggestions to Aid Sleep continued

- Try curling up in bed with a pillow or a large, soft, stuffed animal. It may aid you as it did when you were young.
- Lie on your side. Place a second soft pillow over the exposed ear, leaving your face out between the pillows, or use ear plugs.
- If problems and anxiety are causing you much sleeplessness, consider talking them over with an understanding friend. If this doesn't help, consider counseling.
- Widowed people suggest sleeping in a different room; sleeping on your spouse's side of the bed so your side is empty instead; putting a pillow behind your back as you lie on your side.
- Try mind games – counting sheep, recalling a nice day, plotting a novel, planning a trip, etc. Pleasant, relaxing thoughts help distract you from worries and the inability to sleep.
- You may find the repetition of prayers to be sleep inducing.
- Remember that many bereaved people have difficulty sleeping. Concentrate on the sleep that you do get. We often sleep more than we realize. Try to keep an optimistic attitude about sleep.

