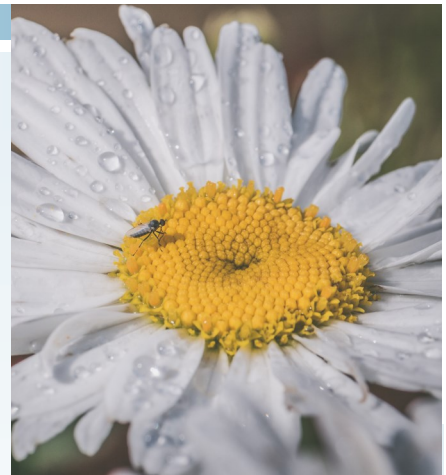


Dealing With Death By Kenneth Czillinger

- Generally it takes 18 – 24 months just to STABILIZE after the death of a family member. It can take much longer when the death was a violent one. Recognize the length of the mourning process. Beware of the developing unrealistic expectations of yourself.
- Your worst times are not usually at the moment a tragic event takes place, you are in a state of shock or numbness. Often you slide “into the pit” 4 – 7 months after the event. Strangely, when you are in the pits and tempted to despair, this may be the time when most people expect you to be over your loss.
- When people ask you how you are doing, don’t always say “Fine”. Let some people know how you feel, even if it is terrible.
- Talking with a friend or with others who have been there and survived can be very helpful. Those who have been there speak your language. Only they can say, “I know, I understand.” You are not alone.
- Often depression is a cover for anger. Learn to uncork your bottle and find appropriate ways to release your bottled-up anger. What you are going through seems so unfair and unjust.
- Take time to lament, to experience being a victim. It may be necessary to spend some time feeling sorry for yourself. “Pity parties” sometimes are necessary and can be therapeutic.
- It is all right to cry, to question, to be weak. Beware of allowing yourself to be “put on a pedestal” by others who tell you what an inspiration you are because of your strength and your ability to cope so well. If they only knew!
- Remember, you may be a rookie at the grief experience you’re going through. This may be the first death of someone close. You are new at this, and you don’t know what to do or how to act. You need help.
- Reach out and try to help others, even in some small ways. This little step forward may help prevent you from dwelling on yourself.
- Many times of crisis ultimately can become times of opportunity. Mysteriously, your faith in yourself, in others, and in God can be deepened through crisis. Seek out persons who can serve as symbols of hope to you.



Dear Friend,

Please be patient with me; I need to grieve in my own way and in my own time.

Please don’t take away my grief or try to fix my pain. The best thing you can do is listen to me and let me cry on your shoulder. Don’t be afraid to cry with me. Your tears will tell me how much you care.

Please forgive me if I seem insensitive to your problems. I feel depleted and drained, like an empty vessel, with nothing left to give.

Please let me express my feelings and talk about my memories. Feel free to share your own stories of my loved one with me. I need to hear them.

Please understand why I must turn a deaf ear to criticism or tired clichés. I can’t handle another person telling me that time heals all wounds.

Please don’t try to find the “right” words to say to me. There’s nothing you can say to take away the hurt. What I need are hugs, not words.

Please accept me for who I am today. Pray with me and for me. Should I falter in my own faith, let me lean on yours. In return for your loving support I promise that, after I’ve worked through my grief, I will be a more loving, caring, sensitive, and compassionate friend – because I have learned from the best.

Love, (Your name)

– Margaret Brownley

Dealing with Grief

When we lose something we love, we suffer. Our suffering is physical, emotional, and spiritual. Our life is disrupted, it is changed. It will never be the same again.

We are each a unique individual before and after our loss. We each deal with grief in our own personal way. However, there are some common characteristics found in the experience of grief. We offer this information to help you recognize some important matters to consider during bereavement.

- Grief is cyclical. We have ups and downs on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. Just when you feel things are getting better, something triggers a memory, and you are back where you started from.
- Time does lessen the frequency of the pain.

However, time by itself doesn't heal. It is what we do with time that may be healing.

- The feeling may be intense. This is why some people shy away from you.
- Faith may sustain you, but it will not substitute for the feelings of grief.
- If you feel pressured to "be brave", find someone you trust and tell them how you really feel.
- You may lose concern for yourself by neglecting your health, skipping meals, and failing to get adequate rest. When you are under great stress, you may be more susceptible to disease. It is important to eat properly and rest even if you don't sleep. If people urge you to see your doctor – do it.

*Grief is normal. Do not apologize for your emotions.
Do not bottle them up. Express them privately if you're
embarrassed to grieve openly.*

- "Searching" behavior is described as restlessness and a loss of interest in everything but the deceased. It never ends, but as time passes, the duration of the "searching" distress should lessen. (During this time you may think you see the deceased, or you may forget for a moment that they have died. One woman set the table for her husband every day for a time).
- Emotional reactions (angry feelings, guilt feelings, etc.) are normal. During bereavement these feelings can be worse than anything you've experienced in life. Don't be frightened by this. It is not unusual, but if you are alarmed, seek a professional opinion.
- Crying at unexpected times is normal.
- Friends and family cannot guess what you may need, so let them know what helps you. No one can substitute for your loss. Try to enjoy people as they are. Don't rush into new relationships – but don't be afraid of them either.
- Try not to make any major changes in your life during the first year (e.g., change jobs, remarry, leave school, etc.). Most people find it best to stay settled in familiar surroundings until they can consider their future calmly. You cannot run away from memories.
- Let children know that sadness is normal and not to be hidden. It's also important to enjoy times of happiness and not feel guilty about them.
- Seek expert advice and get more than one opinion regarding financial matters.
- Do not overextend yourself. Wait until you're ready to get a job or do volunteer work.
- Relationships with family and friends should be cultivated. You need people now more than ever before.
- Your faith may be a major source of comfort, or you may lose it during this period of loss. Either reaction can lead to later spiritual growth.



Coping as a Family

Communication is the key to coping and growing as a family through grief. It is important to be together to talk, cry, rage, or even sit in silence. At the same time there should be respect for each member's way of handling grief. Some family members will grieve privately, others openly, and others a combination of these two styles. In many ways each family member must grieve alone. Here are some suggestions to help with family grief.

them know that you love them.

- Maintain balance of attention between deceased family member and surviving family members.
- Try to be sensitive to each other's feelings. Feelings are often difficult to verbalize. Listen to what is meant as well as to what is said.
- Hugs or a hand on the arm or back give comfort and a sense of closeness. It may be helpful to set aside time to be "alone together" as a family or to express grief in their own way.
- Be a good listener.
- Plan family projects or trips.
- Make a "family diary" in which each family member may contribute a writing or drawing. You may want to make a collage together.
- Be careful not to give each other the silent treatment.
- Make sure the person who died continues to be part of family conversations.
- Respect the life stages of various family members; an adolescent might gravitate towards peers in coping with grief. Everyone has a unique way of grieving. Accept each person's method of coping.
- Discuss the loved one's former role in the family, and the changes in family duties and roles. Be careful not to expect a family member to replace or to be the same as the member who died (expecting a young boy whose father died to be "the man of the house" or a son whose sibling died to be like that sibling in schoolwork, sports, etc.). Discuss what will be missed and irreplaceable.
- If depression, withdrawal, grief, or family problems are getting out of control, seek professional help.
- Recognize that anniversaries, birthdays, and special holidays will be difficult for each member of the family. Discuss together how to observe these occasions. Should there be a variation on traditional celebrations? Do any family members have particular concerns, suggestions?
- Consult family members on the disposition of the deceased loved one's possessions, including their room. Take your time and tread carefully where these precious mementos are concerned. If possible, put off making major decisions about moving, giving away possessions, etc.
- Studies show that a bereaved person's self-esteem is extremely low. Survivors should work on their image of themselves and help each family member to think and feel good about themselves.
- Remember it is difficult to help your family if you are falling apart. Working on your own grief will

- Continue to give attention and time to your present family members when you are together. Let

**A gentle word
Like summer rain
May soothe the heart
And banish pain.
– Anonymous**

*There is no pain so great as the memory of joy
in present grief.*

-Aeschylus

Life is...

**Life is an opportunity, benefit from it.
Life is beauty, admire it.
Life is bliss, taste it.
Life is a dream, realize it.
Life is a challenge, meet it.
Life is a duty, complete it.
Life is a game, play it.
Life is a promise, fulfill it.
Life is sorrow, overcome it.
Life is a song, sing it.
Life is a struggle, accept it.
Life is a tragedy, confront it.
Life is an adventure, dare it.
Life is luck, make it.
Life is too precious, do not destroy it.
Life is life, fight for it.**
-Mother Theresa

