

Be kind to yourself, and surround yourself with loved ones.

Try these and other tips for enduring the grieving process

Grief is a complex emotion. And when you're in the throes of it, you may find it difficult to do almost anything else, even complete simple tasks. It's common to feel indecisive, even about trivial matters. Many people just want the pain to end but are convinced it never will.

But life goes on, and you, the one grieving, need to go on, too. Though you may not be able to function at pre-loss capacity for a while, there are steps you can take to ensure that your life doesn't fall apart while you're in the midst of your grief. Here's what the experts advise.

What to do

Be patient with yourself. Expect, for a time, that your functioning will be impaired. Sometimes it helps to let those around you know about your grief. Ask for help in staying focused. Find someone who can even take over some mundane or basic tasks until you are yourself again.

When grieving, be patient with yourself.



Find a listening post. Good listeners don't tell you to get over it, give advice, regale you with stories of their own or tell you how to fix it. If it were that easily done, you would have done it by now. Look for someone who is patient and kind. You may identify good listeners through a grief support group, religious adviser, best friend, sibling, sympathetic colleague or psychotherapist.

Remember that grieving is not completed in a day or a month or a year. You are not just grieving the lost person or job or health or hometown. You are letting go of an integral part of yourself that was a large part of who you are. It takes time — sometimes a very long time. As time passes, your pain will begin to subside. Be prepared, however, to experience periods of rawness — usually when least expected.

Talk about it, cry about it and sit with it. When you have done enough talking, thinking and finding ways to cope with your loss, you will notice the emotional charge begins to dissipate. It doesn't have to be a moment of awakening where you suddenly find enlightenment; you will simply begin to feel different. You will be forever changed by your experience, but you will feel that you can finally get back to being yourself. *Turn over for more helpful tips.*

What not to do

Don't be too strong for your own good. Surround yourself with people for whom you don't have to put on a brave front. In a work setting that may mean soliciting an understanding colleague to run interference for you. It also may mean opting out of everyday tasks for a time. Grieving is an act of great courage and strength; it is not for the weak.

Don't push yourself when you are tired. The more significant the loss, the more profound it is and the longer the recovery process. To function as well as possible, get enough rest. Cut yourself some slack while you slowly adapt to your new reality.

Don't expect to feel one emotion. Expect a range of emotions. Your feelings may run the gamut from sad to mad to despair to occasional glimpses of happiness — and back again. If you are able to feel only sad, you will get stuck in perpetual despair. This is not a good place to be; it invites depression, helplessness and a feeling that nothing matters. If you are able to feel merely mad, your rage will have you stuck in a lonely trap as it pushes everybody away from you. Focus on the occasional, if rare, happy things that inevitably flutter through your mind.

Don't blame yourself for what happened. Taking responsibility for mistakes helps us to learn and to grow. Survivor's guilt, however, does not. A certain amount is normal, initially. But if you find you are continuing to blame yourself for not being able to save or heal a deceased or disabled loved one, a normal grief reaction becomes counterproductive.

Don't alienate yourself. Grief is a lonely enough process without also isolating yourself. You'll need all the help you can get to muddle through this in-between time. You may feel that you aren't what you were, you're not sure who you are, and you're not yet who you will be after you have recovered from the loss.



But you have begun the process. And the only way forward is to put one step in front of the other.

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