

Strategies for Growing in Grief

Two pages

You can do more than just cope with loss. There are ways to even grow from grief and tragedy. These six principles can help you grow as you journey with your grief:

Build on your strengths

Look back at previous crises or losses. What strategies helped you then? They can be helpful now. Sometimes you may have to reframe them. For example, one woman told me that her spouse had helped her through the loss of a parent. But now she had to deal with the death of her husband alone. She realized, though, what helped was having someone to talk with as she coped. She found that she could find such a confidant in a close friend.

Your spirituality or philosophy also can be a great strength. Most spirituality and philosophies address loss and suffering. Ask yourself, how do my beliefs help me as I face this loss? Talk to those who share your beliefs.

Use your support systems

Your family, friends, co-workers and others can be of great help. Recognize their unique gifts. Some may be good listeners while others are good at helping in more tangible ways. Grief is hard work, and we may need time off from our grief. Some friends offer respite.

You can also find support in others who have had similar experiences. Grief groups offer validation of your reactions, strategies for coping, and hope. Moreover, as you help others through participation in a support group, you become more aware of your own strengths.

Remember the continuing bond

The people you love never fully leave you. You retain a bond with them through your memories, and the ways they affected your development. Think of the legacies they left you.



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Continued from front

Focus on positive memories

Sometimes it helps to have something to reinforce those memories such as creating a photograph album, or a journal, to keep those memories alive.

Use empowering language

If you focus on the tragedy of loss, you reinforce the tragic. Instead, focus on positive language such as the courage you will need to meet the challenges of loss. Recognize that you make choices on how you cope with your grief. Learn from the decisions you make. Even small choices reinforce your ability to cope as you journey with loss.

Focus on growth

Periodically review how you have changed as you journey with grief. What new insights have you developed? What skills have you gained?

Be patient with yourself

The journey with grief is uneven as you both cope with your loss and learn to live a different life without a person you loved. As you grieve, expect both good and bad days. Some days you may be more productive than others. That, too, is part of the journey.

Remain hopeful

Life after loss will be different. But as hard as it may be to believe now, it can still have joy and happiness. Keep sight of the future. Focus on where you wish to be next week, next month, or next year. Think of the small daily changes you can make to bring you closer to your goal. Remember that while we have no choice about loss or the grief that follows, we do have choices about how we grieve. Choose growth.

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