

How can I cope?

It's been several months since your loved one died. You and those around you think you should be getting better. But instead you may be overwhelmed at times and feel that everything is "too much".

Negative feeling you thought you'd overcome may return even worse than ever—you may feel confused or angry, more fearful, lonely and unsure of yourself, more depressed and discouraged.

If this is happening, it may help to remind you that you're probably just entering another stage of the grief process, a time of further change and adjustment.

You aren't 'crazy'. Grief is like the ocean: it doesn't stay still, it ebbs and flows. The ups and downs you experience are normal in grief. It usually takes many months to move



past the shock of death and the disbelief that it has happened.

The busy-ness of the first weeks—with funeral arrangements, phone calls and visits, financial, business and insurance matters to settle — has a numbing effect. Your feelings are blurred and dulled. But the feelings are still there, and often begin to surface around the time you expect to start doing better.

As the busy-ness quiets down and company comes less often, grief is often at it's worst. You may need some emotional 'band-aids'. What can you do? How can you cope?

For starters, think about how you coped in the past when the going got rough. What sort of things did you do? What worked and what didn't? You might make a list. Post it on your refrigerator to remind you what you did, and that you made it through tough times before.

And here are a few ideas that others found helpful (but you might want to use your own instead).

Talk about it: Let off steam with someone you can trust.

Escape: Find a quiet place where you feel at peace—in the woods, by the ocean, by a brook—a place that is soothing to your spirit.

Do something physical: Exercise, bake bread, wash windows, move the furniture, paint the living room—something that gets you moving.

Do something for someone else: Get your mind off yourself. Others may be afraid to intrude; they wait for you to take the first move.

Plan some recreation: It's good for your body, mind and spirit.

Laugh at yourself: Laughter releases natural chemicals in the body that help you feel better. It's good medicine.
