

Advice about Loss and Grief

- **There is no recipe or timeline to follow**
- **Your grieving process is yours to own**
- **Take one day at a time.**

What to Expect and Do

There is no returning to life as you knew it. Every day there will be reminders that your loved one is no longer with you. It may be an empty chair at the breakfast table or a regularly scheduled check-in call that no longer comes.

The early days will be an emotionally chaotic and unpredictable time. Eventually, while the grief and pain will still be present, they will become less overwhelming. During this time, you may fear that you are “losing touch,” not respecting his or her legacy, not honoring your love. Your grief and its challenges will evolve as life moves forward.

Keep in mind that no two experiences are the same. No two losses are the same. What works for you may be different from what works for someone else. Be kind and patient with yourself as your needs and perspectives change. What works for you on Monday may not work on Tuesday.

Above all else, be relentlessly patient with yourself and give yourself permission to attend to yourself and your heart.

Based on our conversations with bereaved individuals, researchers and therapists, here are nine considerations that may help you cope.....

1

Take care of yourself

Care for yourself in a way that is nourishing, gentle and kind. There is no right way to cope, no ideal time frame, no best method. Recognize healthy relationships and create boundaries by saying yes to people and things that support you, and no to those that don't. Preservation of self will continue to evolve with time. At first, this may simply mean to remember to eat or shower. Over time it may become a conscious decision not to participate in a birthday party, baby shower or relationship.

2

Know you are not alone

No one knew your loved one like you. No one can relate to your pain and grief. While you may feel profoundly isolated, know that many bereaved individuals surround you. We are all invisible. However, when you find someone with a similar kind of loss, we speak a common language, regardless of our culture or community. We share an experience that requires no words.

3

Find ways to remember your loved one

Remember and honor your loved one in ways that embody their spirit, culture, life and passion. It may be creating a keepsake, going to see their favorite rock band, inviting their friends over for dinner or visiting a part of the world they always dreamed of seeing. Many bereaved individuals look to nature for signs of remembrance as they continue their exploration of or commitment to spirituality. Whether it is through sunrises, rainbows or rainfalls, looking to nature can offer solace, remembrance and hope.

4

Reemerge into the world, at your pace

As the world continues to move forward, often in a callous, unrelenting way, it can be devastating to the newly bereaved. Reemerging into social media communities, going back to work, helping others understand how best to support you and more – all pose challenges. Initially, the newly bereaved may find that being in loud or crowded venues is overwhelming. Over time, the challenges change and our grief becomes less debilitating as we learn what is helpful and what is not. Taking the dog for a walk, going to a local yoga class or planting a garden may help you reemerge slowly.

5

Navigate society and find support

In the beginning many may say, “Let me know what you need” or ask, “How can I help?” Yet, you may have no idea how to answer those questions. Searching for and finding resources or activities that support your restoration will be important. Many bereaved individuals try new activities, engage in therapy or other locally based support networks. There are many support groups, camps and retreats that actively support bereaved family members. Some of these can be found in [Evermore's grief directory](#).

6

Connect with others, if and when you wish

Engagement and connection with others can help you cope. Whether through an old friend or new, a pet or volunteer engagement, or another avenue altogether, find ways to help diminish grief's toll and let yourself feel renewed and refreshed.

7

Share your story

At the time, pace and in a manner you are comfortable with, share your story and perspectives with those who love you and want to hear more. You do not need to share the whole story, nor do you need to enter situations that can lead to further trauma. You might start a blog, talk to close friends and family, or choose an open mic event. Bringing light to your loved one's story can help as you cope and support your restoration.

8

Reminders happen

Painful reminders will continue to be a part of your world. Managing these moments will be critical for your coping, health and wellbeing. For example, people may ask you questions like, “How did your loved one die?” It can be helpful to think about your response before being asked, especially for the first time. Simple tasks like grocery shopping may become unbearable, particularly when you approach the cereal aisle and you no longer have to purchase your loved one's favorite cereal or meal. Understanding what you can and cannot do will be important in protecting yourself from additional stress. Yet, the most concerning times may be those that we cannot predict – when our loved one's favorite song comes on the radio or a scent brings on a cascade of memories. Being present in those moments is important. You should not feel ashamed for wanting to hold onto them.

9

Life changes

It will be hard to see life in the same way again. Maybe you no longer cry every day, maybe you can manage to sit in your loved one's room or on their bed or buy their favorite cereal once again. Coping is a lifelong process that will be full of surprises and disappointments. As life changes, you will encounter new hopes, remembrances and moments of loss. Being patient with yourself while finding ways to include both the absence and presence of your loved one in your daily routine may help.