

Additional Thoughts

Live one day at a time. Allow yourself time to be alone as well as to be with others who are a comfort and who will listen when you need to talk. Allow yourself time before you make major decisions about your future. And know that it will take time — months or even years — to feel and accept the feelings that go with death.

Take care of yourself — your mind and your spirit. During stressful times, you may be more likely to get sick. Please make sure that you get routine health care and allow others to care for you during the more stressful times.

Relax ... Exercise ... Eat well. Self care during the grieving process is very important — hot baths, naps, walking or working out can all help ease stress.

You may find hope and comfort from those who have had a similar loss. Sharing with others who have gone through the grieving process can be helpful. Knowing that healing is possible after such a painful experience can give you hope and comfort that some time in the future your grief will also be less painful.

Small pleasures — such as watching a sunset, a walk in the woods, a favorite food — can have a healing effect. Finding pleasure in the little things can be the beginning of discovering the joy of life afresh. A trip, a cause, or a project to focus on may give you a lift.

Give yourself permission to relapse. After feeling better for a time, we may find ourselves back in the old feelings of sadness, despair or anger. This is the nature of grief, up and down, good days and not-so-good days, over and over again. This happens because, as humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and the meaning of death at once. So we let it in a little at a time. Be gentle with yourself and know that healing takes much energy and work.

Drugs and alcohol are not helpful. We cannot prevent or cure grief — it is the natural way of responding to a loss. Nor can we escape our feelings with the abuse of substances. The only way *out* is working *through* the grief.

Reduce stress. You may face many demands at once. Decide what things must be done first and work at those — don't try to do everything at once. Getting back into a routine helps; however, it is best to do things at your own pace.

Do what is good for you. Grieving is a very tiring process. You may find it hard to manage all the challenges facing you. Follow what feels healing to you and what connects you to the people you love. You are the best judge of what you need and what is helpful. And remember there is no set timeline to the grief process and no precise order to how each person processes his or her grief.

Ask for help. You don't have to go through this alone. If you need to talk further, call the **Bereavement Coordinator** of Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service at **330-668-4662** or **800-335-1455**. We have many resources that you might find valuable while working through your grief.



Coping with Grief

Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service
Center for Loss & Hope
3358 Ridgewood Rd • Akron, OH 44333
330-668-4662 • 800-335-1455
www.vnsa.com

Our Purpose is to alleviate suffering, engender hope, promote living and facilitate grieving among patients with serious or life-limiting illnesses, their families and their communities.

A member of the Akron General Health System.

Coping with Grief

We all experience our own unique responses to a significant loss. Yet certain feelings and/or experiences are identified as common with the loss of something we value as important. The following are some of these common feelings/experiences that you may encounter in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Please remember that these are only a few of the possibilities...what you feel today may be very different from what you may feel tomorrow. Responses to a significant loss, such as a death, are as varied as people are.

It is important that you contact your doctor for evaluation and advice if any physical symptoms or health problems persist.

Common Feelings

In response to your grief you may:

- Feel the loss isn't real or that it didn't happen.
- Sense your loved one's presence.
- Feel guilty about being the survivor.
- Feel guilty if you let yourself have some pleasure or fun.
- Have trouble sleeping and dream of your loved one often.
- Keep thinking about the life and death of your loved one.
- Find it hard to concentrate.

- Relive times in the past and feel guilty or angry about things that happened or didn't happen.
- Feel angry at how unfair your experience seems to be.
- Feel anger towards other people or towards God.
- Feel you have been cheated.
- Feel no one knows what your experience of grief is like. Even though they say they understand, you are right — your experience is yours.
- Think you need to take care of others who seem uncomfortable around you.
- Think you should not talk about your feelings of grief in order to protect them.
- Need to tell and retell stories about your loved one.
- Feel mood changes over the slightest things, including smells or music.
- Cry without warning and at unexpected times.
- Feel relief ... and feel a sense of guilt about the relief you feel. Both of these are normal reactions.
- Find holidays or other special days very hard.
- Fear what will happen next.
- Desire to run away or find some way to stay busy in order to avoid the pain.

Physical Responses

Grief can express itself in physical symptoms, such as:

- ♦ Tightness in your throat.
- ♦ Change in or loss of appetite, or even an empty feeling in your stomach.
- ♦ Restlessness and a change in sleeping pattern.
- ♦ Lack of energy.
- ♦ Inability to concentrate.
- ♦ Headache or a "just-not-right" feeling.

Suggestions

These can all be common and normal grief responses. Let yourself cry and talk with people when you need to. While it may be hard to call on another person, it is important to let others know your needs. Remember that they are not mind readers ... even though you may want them to be.

If physical symptoms persist or become worse see your physician for a check up.

Many people are assisted through support groups, counseling, or educational sessions. If you feel the need to talk with someone, you may want to try one of these options. Hospice of Visiting Nurse Service Center for Loss and Hope has several programs that might be a support for you. For more information, call the **Bereavement Coordinator** at **330-668-4662** or **800-335-1455**.