

10 SELF-COMPASSIONATE PRINCIPLES for GRIEF

Though you should reach out to others as you journey through grief, you should not feel obligated to accept the unhelpful responses you may receive from some people. You are the one who is grieving and you get to decide what is helpful to you. The following list is intended both to empower you to heal and to decide how others can help, as well as to decide what might not be helpful for you.

- 1. Everyone experiences grief in their own unique way.** No one else will grieve exactly the same way you do. So, when you turn to others for help, don't allow them to tell you what you should or should not be feeling.
- 2. It is okay to talk about your grief.** Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk as much as you want, as often as you want, about your grief. If at times you don't feel like talking, you also have the right to be silent.
- 3. You may feel a multitude of emotions.** Confusion, disorientation, fear, guilt, and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief journey. Others may try to tell you that feeling angry, for example, is wrong. Don't take these judgmental responses to heart. Instead, find listeners who will accept your feelings without condition.
- 4. Pay attention to your body and be tolerant of you physical and emotional limits.** Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you feeling fatigued. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Get daily rest. Eat balance meals. In addition, don't allow others to push you into doing things you don't feel ready to do.
- 5. You may experience "griefbursts."** Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This can be frightening, but is normal and natural. Find someone who understands and will let you talk it out.
- 6. Ritual can be a powerful tool for healing.** The funeral ritual does more than acknowledge the death of someone loved. It helps provide you with the support of caring people. More importantly, the funeral is a way for you to mourn. After the funeral, allow yourself to find other ways to find the support you need.
- 7. Your spirituality may play a part in your grief journey.** If faith is a part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you feel angry at God, find someone to talk to who won't be critical of your feelings of hurt or abandonment.
- 8. Grief and mourning may lead you to search for meaning.** You may find yourself asking — "Why did he or she die? Why this way? Why now?" Some of your questions may have answers, but some may not. And watch out for clichéd responses some people may give you. Comments like, "It was God's will" or "Think of what you still have to be thankful for" are not helpful and you do not have to accept them.
- 9. Memories are part of moving the grief process.** Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring your memories, find others with whom you can share them.
- 10. Everyone grieves at their own pace.** Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself and avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you. Neither you nor those around you must forget that the death of someone loved changes your life forever.

*Adapted from "Healing Grief at Work" by Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD.
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