



# Strategies to Cope with Grief

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Grief is a normal, though painful response to loss. We experience this following the loss of friends and family through death, divorce, misunderstandings and relocations. We can also experience grief in response to loss associated with physical illness or injury, job loss, or other significant loss from any cause.

Children are affected by loss and will need the support of adults who may also be grieving. When grieving, we may experience decreased appetite, difficulty sleeping, frequent tearfulness, difficulty concentrating, anger, and/ or a sense of isolation.

Grief is a highly personal experience. There are no set stages or feelings that all people go through in response to all losses. One point that can be made is that our responses, thoughts and feelings come and go with varying intensity across time. There is no "right" way to grieve.

## **Some Strategies for Coping:**

### **Make time work for you —**

Time passes without regard to what we do with it. In the process of grief, it is important that you acknowledge your experience: your thoughts, feelings, and changes in behavior across time. Anniversary dates and milestone events in our lives will often recall a loss we have had. When this happens, it is helpful to recognize it and talk about it.

### **Balance your time and ask for help —**

Solitude can be an important element of grief for many people. Nonetheless, it is essential that we balance

solitude with community. Return to and maintain as much of your routine as you can. In addition to their usual contacts, ask friends and family to call you at scheduled intervals (three months, six months, and a year after the loss or an important date that you can anticipate an increase in your feelings of loss).

### **Attend to your physical needs and appearance —**

It is important that you get rest and nourishment. While restful sleep and normal appetite take some time to return, you should try to eat small meals and sleep at night. Maintain daily hygiene.

### **Ask for practical support —**

Most people want to be helpful, but it is not always easy to know what to do in response to loss. Ask for help with childcare, grocery shopping, housekeeping, and other tasks, especially in the early stages of your grief.

### **Avoid numbing your pain —**

Do not use drugs or alcohol to avoid difficult thoughts or feelings.

### **Avoid making life-changing decisions —**

Give yourself some time to adjust to your loss before you make other significant changes.

### **Maintain hope —**

While it rarely happens as quickly as we wish, we do progress through our grief. Having done so, we may be changed in unpredictable but meaningful ways that contributes to our own or another's growth.