

## **How Can I Cope With My Grief?**

### **Set aside time for yourself**

Set aside some time each day for grieving, so that you can cry and remember the person who died. Be patient and kind to yourself. Your feelings may be unpredictable and uncomfortable. Remind yourself that your uncomfortable feelings are expected and will fade as time goes on. Meditation, relaxation techniques, massages, and listening to music can help reduce the emotional and physical stress of grief.

### **Try writing**

Sometimes after a loss, it's hard to figure out exactly what you are feeling. Writing is a good way to identify those feelings. It can also help you to feel some sense of control over your intense emotions. By writing down some of the obsessive thoughts that keep coming into your mind, they may lose some of their power over you.

You may choose to write a letter to your loved one, write a poem or story, or keep a journal. Write what you feel, trying not to screen your thoughts. Give yourself permission to write whatever comes to mind and remember to also write about the simple pleasures and joys you have experienced.

### **Stay connected**

Talk about how you are feeling. Resist the urge to be quiet around or to avoid people. If you are having trouble talking about your feelings with family members and friends, consider joining a bereavement support group.

### **Take care of yourself**

Try to get enough sleep, eat a well-balanced diet, and exercise regularly. Exercise will usually help you feel emotionally better and may tire you enough so that you sleep better.

Try to avoid turning to alcohol or drugs to help ease painful feelings. While these substances may provide short-term relief from your feelings, they hinder the grieving process and can actually result in depression and poor health. If you find yourself using alcohol or drugs in this way, ask for help from your GP or contact an organisation like Alcoholics Anonymous.

### **Put off making major decisions**

Try to avoid making any major decisions at this time, like moving house or getting rid of your loved one's possessions immediately after the death. You may not be thinking as clearly as you would wish and may do things you will later regret.

### **Handling special days**

Birthdays, holidays, and the anniversary of the death can be difficult times, although the actual anticipation of the event can often be worse than the day itself. Talk with other family members and plan in advance how you want to celebrate the event or spend the day. You might decide to make a change in your usual traditions or set aside part of the day to remember the person who died in your own special way.

### **Relapsing**

Be aware that you may hit a low spot after the death, once the tasks of planning the funeral and sorting out the affairs of the person who died are over. Ask for help if you need it. Grief may also resurface years later, perhaps after another loss, or following the loss of someone important to you as a child.

### **Feeling depressed?**

If you're feeling depressed (which may cause symptoms such as ongoing sleep problems, poor appetite, loss of energy and interest in things, or suicidal thoughts), it is important to seek help from your doctor.

### **Need more help?**

There is an excellent collection of leaflets and broadcasts on the CRUSE website <http://www.cruse.org.uk>. The topics covered include traumatic death, and death due to violent crime. CRUSE provide one-to-one counselling throughout the UK (contact tel 0844 477 9400)

**Adapted from:** 1) Help is at Hand: A resource for people bereaved by suicide and other sudden, traumatic death. Centre for Suicide Research, University of Oxford, Headington, Oxford OX3 7JX, [www.psychiatry.ox.ac.uk/csr](http://www.psychiatry.ox.ac.uk/csr) 2) Jeannette Curtis, Douglas Dana. Coping with grief. HealthLink BC. <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kbase/as/aa122213/how.htm>; 3) Grieving: Facing Illness, Death and Other Losses. [www.familydoctor.org](http://www.familydoctor.org) 2006 4) <http://www.cruse.org.uk> (accessed Jan 2011)

