



Supporting you through change

'A Grief Encounter'

“Allowing for the experience of emotional pain is an opportunity to embrace a powerful process for self affirmation, empowerment, resilience and transformation” – Suzzanne Ajame-Singh

Grief may result from a significant change or loss in our lives, although painful, grief is a normal human response to loss and is both healthy and surmountable; allowing yourself to grieve fully will enable you not only to recover but to expand and grow.

With or without willingness, we must learn to let go and move forward without that person or thing we want in our life, and while we embrace the journey, healthy grief relies on self-care.

Life is change, and every day we experience change, however, if we deny ourselves the space to process losses, big or small, major grief that can result from big losses can feel unfamiliar, overwhelming and sometimes frightening.

Grief is an emotional wound that takes time and loving attention in order for you to heal; to work through grief completely, means facing your feelings openly, fully and courageously.

Patience and resilience are required to tolerate and accept your feelings for however long it takes, even when others around you have moved on and you fear that grief will go on indefinitely. When you allow space for your grief, it will ease with time and that loving attention you give yourself will see you through, back to wholeness and balance.

The grieving process may require you to dig for a deeper level of self-care and support that is different to what you are used to when handling familiar challenges. It is important for you to accept a new level of need, regardless of your strength and your ability to cope with challenges before you experienced a new loss.

There are things you can do to support and nurture yourself whatever stage of the grieving process you are experiencing.

Here are my top five practical ways for self care when grieving:

1. Allow and honour your feelings

However painful, allow your feelings to be present, acknowledged and expressed; remember that all things must and do pass.

You may fear that you will be engulfed by grief if you allow your feelings. The truth is that if you allow space for feelings, they do subside in time. Unexpressed grief does not go away until you give it the time and attention it deserves.

2. Be the guardian of your thoughts

Don't believe everything you think! If you experience a sudden or unexpected loss or death, be particularly gentle and kind in your dialogue with yourself and others. Watch out for and banish self-persecuting. Invest your mental energy in supportive and caring thoughts.

3. Nourish and nurture your body, mind and spirit

Grief can be physically exhausting, and even if you don't have an appetite, try to eat high energy foods to keep your energy boosted. Asking others to cook meals for you is a way that others can offer you support if they are not sure how else to support you.

Listen to soothing or uplifting music, read literature that inspires or strengthens you, connect with nature, book yourself a pamper day or massage, take time out to relax, rest and re-energise.

4. Talk to others and seek support

Try to connect with others. If you feel able to, then talk to friends and family about your feelings. If you feel that you are not coping, you may prefer to seek help from a professional counsellor, who has experience of working with grief and who can offer you a safe space to be and support you unconditionally.

Accepting support from others and acknowledging your vulnerability is a personal strength; by accepting external support you will be more able to take care of yourself, you will develop new shared ways of coping, strengthened courage and resilience.

5. Remain hopeful that recovery is possible

Remind yourself that all things must and do pass, and that you will in your own time and in your own way recover a sense of balance and purpose in your life. Recovery is possible and you will restore your capacity for living and a willingness to enjoy a full life. You will one day be able to integrate your loss, re-invest in your life and begin to look forward once again with a restored and renewed sense of self.

Final words

Self care is a balanced, healthy relationship with oneself - one that is positive, affirming, nurturing and transforming. Have the courage to grieve and you will open up new experiences to yourself as you integrate your loss and sorrow. Our love for those and that which we have lost never dies. Life and death are all about change and change is the only certainty we have in this life.

Mourning offers us time out to gain a new mastery of ourselves and our lives; embrace, integrate, restore and move forward!

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