



Grief & Loss

Oftentimes, people who have endured a major loss in their lives wonder, “When will this end? When will I feel better?” There is no set time limit for grief. Since it is such an individualized, personal process there is no way to predict when the sadness will ease.

As a part of being human, it is natural that we will experience painful losses in our lives. These losses do not only involve the death of someone close to us, but can also include the loss of a relationship, the loss of health and mobility, or even the loss of a job. The grief that people feel can be frightening and overwhelming. In addition, many of us are uncomfortable when we do not know how to support our grieving family members, friends, or co-workers.

Remember that ***grief is a natural response to loss*** and that each person may handle grief differently. Some reach out to family and friends as a way of easing the emotional pain while others retreat to privacy. The act of grieving is a necessary process that should not be avoided or pushed aside. Avoiding the feelings of sadness and loss may complicate the grieving process and make matters worse.

Given the variety of ways that people react to loss, it is important to look at coping methods. These coping methods can help people get on with their lives. Here are some suggestions to consider:

1. Take it easy.

Do not resume normal activities unless you are really ready to do so. Some people find that resuming a normal routine is a welcome distraction while many others push themselves to “get back into the swing

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of things” while feeling vulnerable and emotional. Keep in mind that you do not have to do it all.

2. Do not ignore your feelings.

Let them come, acknowledge them and give yourself time and privacy to deal with them.

3. Ask for help if you need it!

It is likely that your friends, family and co-workers want to help you, but may not know how. It may make them feel good to be able to help, even if it is just to listen.

4. Privacy is important, but do not isolate yourself. An important part of grieving involves talking and working through your thoughts and feelings.

5. Avoid the use of alcohol or other drugs as a way of “numbing your feelings.”

While using substances to escape may temporarily help, it can lead to abuse and addiction.

Expect that those around you may be uncomfortable, quiet or overly protective of you at first. It may be particularly hard to go back to your former activities when everyone treats you differently, but this will also pass with time. It is okay to let others know if you are not ready to talk. Just remember that those around you generally have the best intentions at heart.

If several months have passed and your feelings continue to overwhelm you and your ability to function seems impaired, it may be a good idea to seek professional counseling and call your Employee/Member Assistance Program (EAP/MAP). Remember that giving yourself enough time to grieve helps to achieve perspective on losses endured. Eventually you can move on with your life and begin to look forward to the future, while cherishing your past memories.

The logo for Employee Resource Systems, Inc. (ERS) features the letters 'ERS' in a large, white, serif font. The letters are set against a dark blue background that has a white, stylized mountain peak shape behind them.

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