

# Some tips for you when you're grieving

Grief doesn't come in neat, consecutive stages. In fact, there's not much about grief that's neat at all. It can come in waves, sometimes so strong that you think you're drowning in emotions. They may be scary, unfamiliar, and stop you from sleeping, eating and doing even the simplest of tasks. Many people worry and think they're going crazy. Don't expect it to be a smooth road, it just isn't. Every day can be unpredictable. And people in the same family will do their grieving quite differently – there's no right or wrong way. Your grief is what you say it is – because you're the one going through it.

- **Time does NOT heal.** It just moves on. It's what you do with your time that creates the healing. Doing nothing doesn't make your grief go away. You can't avoid it. You can't hide from it. You need to go 'with it'. You don't get 'over it', you just adapt. And this takes a lot of time and energy and can be exhausting.

One benefit of time is that it lets the reality of the loss slowly sink in. At the beginning, it can all be a blurr and many people function as if on 'auto-pilot'. As time passes, you can begin to work out how you are going to manage the changes that this loss inevitably will bring – this becomes one of the major tasks for grieving people – learning to adjust to what's happened. Life will take on a new appearance, a new 'normal'.

- **Talk about it.** You don't have to pretend that you're OK. Talk to a friend you trust and tell them how you're feeling. It's important to get your feelings off your chest. Talk about what happened – this helps the reality of the loss to sink in, especially in the early days when it's often hard to believe this is true. Keeping a journal or diary is another way to 'talk' out what's going around in your head.

- **Have a good cry.** Crying is coping. It just makes others feel awkward so they often urge you to be strong and think of all your happy memories. Crying is okay and not crying is okay. Often we don't give ourselves permission to cry, we're embarrassed and we think others will think less of us. Emotional tears have healing powers for your body, they calm you and de-stress you. That's why we call it a "good cry" – it's actually good for you.

“ *People cry not because they are weak. It's because they've been strong for too long.* ”

- **People may be quite uncomfortable around you.** Even people you know well may not know what to say or say things that surprise you or make you mad. They think they have to cheer you up or offer you some wise words or say something to make the hurt lessen.

When someone dies, a lot of people might come to the funeral. But it doesn't mean you'll have a lot of ongoing support. It doesn't take long before the phone stops ringing and people don't drop in. Sometimes it's because they think you have your family around or other friends will be there for you. But the truth is, the time after a funeral can be very lonely and isolating and many people avoid you because they don't know what to say. They do care, but they feel uncomfortable.

- **Ask for help.** There is no reason why you should cope with your grief on your own. If you are worried about yourself or feel overwhelmed by your feelings, it's time to see a counsellor or talk to your doctor. This is not a sign of weakness but rather a sign of self-care as you realise you need some extra support and guidance.

Adapted from  
"Now that the funeral is over"  
Doris Zagdanski