

Ideas for Self Care

Physical

Remember the basics of life – eat, sleep, exercise, drink plenty of water, and breathe... slow, deliberate breaths.

Schedule an appointment with your Primary Care Physician.

Provide the best opportunity for restful sleep by avoiding stimulants throughout the evening. Exercise is nature's anti-depressant and enhances sleep opportunity but should be done earlier in the day. Caffeinated food, including chocolate and most carbonated drinks, are sleep robbers. Alcohol is a depressant that magnifies an already depressed state of mind and does not contribute to restful, uninterrupted sleep.

Eat properly. Don't allow yourself to get too hungry or to go without meals. Try not to overeat. Often, we experience a gnawing, empty feeling that we mistake as hunger and seek to fill that void with food that may be hard to digest or upsetting. You may experience some physical symptoms, for grief often manifests itself physically. Do not dismiss these symptoms; see your physician as soon as possible.

Keep a log of medications you consume including dosages and times. Grief causes confusion and forgetfulness.

Let your friends give what they offer... to be with you, to provide a meal, run errands, housework, yardwork.

Acute grieving depletes energy, leaving little concern for good grooming. For a time it may take great effort and determination to shower, shave, arrange one's hair, makeup and dress each morning, but caring for one's physical appearance is a critical step toward restoring well-being, balance, and orderliness to one's life.

Emotional

Allow yourself your feelings – remember feelings are not “good” or “bad.” They are just feelings, and they are ALL normal.

Remember your emotions may change minute by minute. Numbness, shock, despair, anger, guilt, relief and many other emotions are all normal.

Don't suppress, avoid, or postpone grief's expression. Let yourself feel it! Cry! Tears are cathartic and cleansing. Friends/extended family may feel helpless faced with the magnitude of the loss and grief. They try to soothe, may even plead with bereaved not to cry. Don't suppress your grief to spare others distress. If you are reluctant to express your pain in others' presence, provide uninterrupted time each day to reflect upon the life shared, your loss and sorrow...a time to mourn.

Keep a journal. Write your feelings, your dreams, and your memories. Journaling is a great way to express emotions, and it allows you to look back later to see your progress.

Laugh. There is nothing funny about suicide or the death of someone we love but there is healing power in humor. It is okay to laugh. Laughter is healthy and healing.

Find special ways to honor the memory of your loved one – plant a tree, make a memory album, donate money in their name, light a candle on their birthday.

Suicidal thoughts are scary. When someone we love dies, we are overwhelmed by the pain of loss and fear of the future without them. We may believe we cannot endure the intensity of the pain. For a time, we may not wish to. It is normal to want to escape the pain of loss and grief. It is not abnormal to think of ending one's own life to escape it, but there is considerable difference between having suicidal thoughts and acting upon them. If you are obsessed with thoughts of killing yourself, begin to seriously consider ways of ending your life or believe you don't deserve to live, call the national suicide prevention hotline 1-800-273-8255, call 911, reach the crisis text line at 741741 and see a mental health professional without delay.

Remember that you have suffered a great loss and a horrific trauma. Allow yourself the time you need to heal.

Social

Allow yourself to talk about your loved one. Find a safe place to do just that...whether you call a friend, speak with your church leader, or join a support group.

Speak of your pain, your loss, the cause of your loss as long and as often as you need to speak of it.

Attend a social event as soon as you can – a movie, a concert, a sporting event. These occasions provide the mind momentary respite from what has happened.

Plan for special occasions including holidays, birthdays, Mother's Day, even if that plan is to stay at home.

Re-establish routine in your life. People thrive on orderliness in their lives and a loved one's death disturbs this orderliness in the most devastating manner possible. Re-establishing routine is a major, necessary step in reaffirming life's continuance and future wellbeing. For those who are confronted constantly by the family member's absence re-establishing routine means redistribution of household chores and living arrangements. Adjusting to a loved one's death means many heartbreaking, but necessary changes from life as it once was.

When you're ready, consider volunteering. Many survivors have found this to be an important part of their healing. Volunteering for an organization your loved one cared about or perhaps the LOSS Team or another suicide prevention organization may be healing.

Remember this is your journey. Try not to compare your grief to another's grief journey. Everyone deals with loss in their own way and on their own time table.

It may not feel like you are making progress towards feeling or functioning better. Try to remember especially in the initial days, weeks and even months you may need to take things one minute at a time. Slowly that will become one hour at a time then one day at a time.