



Grieving When You Lose Someone Close

by Marianna Kane Neal

When someone you love dies, your world falls apart. Life seems horribly unfair. The emptiness within you seems like it will swallow you up.

Once, you took for granted that the people you love would be there forever, that everything would always turn out OK. Now things aren't so certain anymore.

CareNotes

Take One — And Take Heart
Give One — And Give Hope

Getting Through

The awful way you feel right now—sad, maybe angry or guilty or crazy—is known as grief. Grief is a natural but painful process that happens after you lose someone or something very important to you.

There is no one “right” way to deal with your pain, no set amount of time when your pain will be over. But there are some positive steps you can take to help yourself to heal and to find the strength you need to get through one day at a time.

Be patient with yourself. You probably cannot imagine ever being happy again. Meanwhile, people around you may be telling you to “get on with your life.”

They mean well, but you may not be ready for this kind of advice. Ask them to be patient with you, and be patient with yourself. Tell others what you need from them at this point in time—listening, sharing memories of the person who is gone, or just being there with you and for you.

No one can predict how long the grieving process will take in any particular situation. But someday, believe it or not, you will no longer want to hold on to the pain. Gradually, you will be able to accept what has happened and move beyond your sorrow.

Accept your feelings. You don’t have to act as if nothing has happened. Something very painful has happened to you, and you need to recognize it.

It’s OK to cry or just feel sad. Express your grief in the way that is most comfortable for you. You might try writing a farewell letter or poem to your loved one. Putting thoughts into words can help to lessen the ache in your heart.

You may be surprised at thoughts that surface. Perhaps you wonder why you’re alive when your loved one is not. Maybe you’re thinking about your own death and how it frightens you. You might be angry at yourself for not

spending more time with your loved one. Or you may be furious at the person who died, or at God who “permitted” this to happen.

These are natural reactions. Be gentle with yourself rather than criticizing your reactions. You have enough pain in your life. Don’t inflict any more upon yourself.

Reach out to those you trust. Loneliness is one of the most difficult parts of grief. No one seems to understand how much you hurt, so you hide your pain. Most teens find a safe haven in their bedrooms.

Although your bedroom offers protection, you have to leave its comfort to survive. Moving beyond those four walls and allowing the sharpness of your pain to fade does not diminish the memory of the one you loved.

It’s easier to deal with grief when you can find someone to talk to about it. Think of someone who might be willing to listen in an understanding and supportive way. Is there a counselor or a grief support group at your school? Do you know a teacher, friend, or relative you would be comfortable talking to? What about a priest, minister, or rabbi? Often the most understanding person is someone who has experienced a similar loss.

Set little goals for yourself. Getting beyond grief takes a lot of effort. You may feel uncomfortable returning to normal activities, but getting back into a routine will help.

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to set one little goal a day: Call up a friend. Clean out a closet. Get tickets for an event you’ll enjoy. Start a creative project. As you try to accomplish your goals, you will slowly move beyond your grief, rather than allowing it to paralyze you. Doing something helpful for someone else is another good way to begin to focus outside of yourself.

***“Don’t let the dark days
trouble you,
Whatever trials life
brings—
Look to the sun,
And spread out your
wings.***

—Heidi

Turn to God. When someone you love dies, it's not unusual to feel angry at God: "This isn't fair! You're supposed to be a good God. Why did you let this happen?" Or you might wonder: "Are you even there, God?"

Let God know how you hurt. It's OK to share your pain and grief. In fact, such thoughts and feelings are prayer. Prayer is simply talking to God, saying what you really feel. You don't need holy words; just speak from your heart. God understands your pain and suffers with you. Open yourself to God's healing love.

Looking Ahead

Have faith in yourself as you slowly adjust to life without the one you love so much. You will never completely stop missing that person. He or she will continue to be in your thoughts. And birthdays and other special occasions might be especially difficult. But gradually you will be able to get through a whole day without feeling those stabs of pain—and then a week, and then a month.

Over time and with effort, you will become a stronger person with a deeper appreciation of life than you ever believed possible. Eventually, you will be able to be happy and live fully again, holding the memory of your loved one forever in your heart. □

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Marianna Kane Neal biography goes here. Lots of things about Marianna. More things about the author here. Interesting things and more interesting things.

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