

Top Five Things to Know About Grief

“Perhaps the most important truth I have learned is that healing in grief is heart-based, not head-based.” - Alan Wolfelt,

You never “get over” a death: You learn to live with it. Learning to live with a loss takes a very long time. Feelings may become stronger 4-6 weeks after a death as the reality starts to sink in. If this occurs, remember that it is normal.

People grieve in their own unique fashion: Some people may need to tell stories, attend grief groups, look through pictures, and express emotions, while others find comfort in solitude. Some may need to make lists, complete tasks, increase physical activity or attend to practical matters. They might not want (or need) to talk or cry.

Grief does not follow any orderly “stages”: Experiencing the emotions of grief is more like riding a roller coaster than taking a walk. Feelings can be unpredictable. It is normal to feel overwhelmed and frightened by their intensity. Try not to analyze thoughts and feelings - just experience them.

Know the “Rules of Grief”: If you find yourself questioning the “appropriateness” or “normalcy” of your actions; such as how often to visit the cemetery; wearing the clothes of the deceased or talking to the person who died, it might be helpful to consider the rules of grief. If you’re not breaking these rules, trust yourself. Do the things that bring you comfort.

The rules of grief are: Don’t hurt yourself. Don’t physically hurt anyone else. You’re not going crazy! Grief is a normal response to a loss. It is completely normal to feel overwhelmed by thoughts and feelings. Don’t be afraid to see a physician if you are having difficulty functioning. Surround yourself with people and things that are supportive, comforting and nonjudgmental.

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