

# 8 Tips for Mindfully Processing Grief

Grief happens to all of us at some time in our lives. You may think that grief happens only after the death of a loved one, but you also grieve after any major change in your identity such as losing a job, divorce, kids going off to college, or moving. No matter the cause, grief can be one of the hardest experiences of your life. Not only can grief feel emotionally unpredictable, but it is often physically and mentally stressful and exhausting. The following tips can help you mindfully navigate the path of grief:

**Practice Mindfulness Meditation.** Grief can often feel like chronic stress, and research shows that 20-30 minutes of twice daily mindfulness practice can alter how your brain processes stress after about eight weeks. Mindfulness practice during grief can help your mind and body find precious moments of peace during this difficult time. Regular mindfulness practice can also help you sleep better and is a crucial foundation for developing healthier habits during your grief journey.

**Prepare for Ups and Downs.** Although some people experience grief in stages, most of us have either easy days or hard days. Be gentle with yourself as you ride the waves of grief; it doesn't always have a beginning, middle, and end. Don't

feel discouraged if you are feeling better one day and wake up the next day feeling worse. Holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, supermarket music, even the return of a favorite TV show can bring on the intensity of grief. This is normal. Be prepared for these ups and downs by mobilizing your healthy resources.

**Get Organized.** Unfortunately, grief is hardly ever only an emotional experience. Mountains of paper work and legal requirements usually accompany loss. Bills may need to be paid, belongings sorted, rooms cleaned out. All of these things can feel overwhelming when you feel you have few emotional resources. Organize and prioritize large amounts of work into manageable, bite-size chunks.

**Eat Mindfully.** While grieving, you might not feel hungry or be able to tell when you're full. Your stomach can feel tied up in knots. Be sure to mindfully eat fresh, healthy food.

**Exercise Regularly.** Stress is not only difficult to experience mentally and emotionally, but can take a physical toll as well. If you are healthy enough to do so, exercise regularly to help mobilize your physical resources to better manage your stress.

**Honor Your Grief with Ritual.** Rituals can be empowering and help to give your mind focus. Rituals can also give you a sense of control over what feels totally uncontrollable--the ups and downs of grief. Light a candle, go to a spot in nature, use prayer or go to a house of worship to help you through the hard days.

**Reach Out.** Grief can feel punishingly lonely. People who know you may not know what to say or how to say it. Reach out anyway. Invite people over, attend a bereavement group and return phone calls and emails. You may also choose this time to make new friends, or rekindle past friendships. If you wait till you feel ready to socialize again, you will likely be waiting too long.

**Set Goals for Your Grief.** Aside from checklists of your tasks and responsibilities, try and visualize the kind of life you want to be living, the kind of people you want to be around, and what kinds of healthy activities you want to be doing. Small steps towards daily goals can often lead to big steps towards these bigger life goals.

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