

Grief Notes

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What helps with grief? by Linda Hopkins, Bereavement Coordinator

How does a person cope when a loved one has died and perhaps the whole landscape of their life has changed? In the early days of grief when I ask a person how they are getting by, I am often told, “I am taking it a day at a time.”

Newly bereaved people are often overwhelmed emotionally and physically. Taking care of oneself in very basic ways is helpful here. People may need to remind themselves to eat and drink and rest. Sleep is important, but it is often difficult as the mind is churning with thoughts about the recent death, all that needs to be done, and the changes that are coming. Unfortunately, sleep is often disturbed for weeks or months and being exhausted makes everything harder. Eating is another basic need that can be a challenge as the appetite may be gone or the energy to fix food may not be there.

Most of us need help to manage all that needs care. Accepting help also helps the helper with their grief as friends and family are not sure what to do but they know they do not want to just stand by. People who bring food are a blessing. Those initial days are busy with practical details such as calls, obituaries, arrangements, funerals, memorials, and paperwork. Often family and friends can help with this and offer emotional support with their presence.

Caring for your emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being is needed. This will mean different things for different people. Outlets for grief are useful. Although many are upset by it, crying is natural. Emotions kept inside are stressful.

Activities can take us away from our sadness for a while or give us a chance to reflect. If you have been a caregiver for a long time, focusing on yourself may take time to get used

Grieving all the time would be exhausting and it is ok, perhaps even necessary, to take a break. We may need to give ourselves permission to take time for ourselves and we may even need to schedule time to make sure it happens. What will help is personal for each individual. Here are a few ideas:

- Take a walk
- Nature time
- Music
- Creative activities
- Reading for pleasure
- Meditating
- Movies and tv
- Family and Friend time
- Writing or journaling
- Exercising
- Educating oneself about grief

to. Many people who have lost a husband or a wife have told me that getting out of the house helps them as does saying yes to invitations to do something with family or friends. Many other grieving people have found comfort from mementos and photos they keep nearby. Others find a way to memorialize their loved one.

Grief is an individual journey. For some the adjustment is quick and for others it takes years. Other sources of help include grief counseling and grief support groups.

Your Northern Light bereavement coordinator is also available to support you. Please call if you would like to speak with one of us for support.