

Summary: Helping Yourself When your Spouse or Partner Dies

Acknowledge your loss – you are beginning a journey that is often frightening, painful, overwhelming and sometimes lonely.

Allow yourself to mourn – you are now faced with the difficult, but important need to grieve. Mourning is the open expression of your thoughts and feelings.

Recognize your grief is unique – your grief is unique because no one else had the same relationship with your spouse that you had.

Talk about your thoughts and feelings – express your grief openly. When you share your grief outside yourself, healing begins.

Expect to feel a multitude of emotions – as strange as some of your emotions may seem, they are normal and healthy.

Find a support system – avoid people who are critical or who try to steal your grief from you. Find people who encourage you to be yourself and who acknowledge your feelings, both happy and sad.

Be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits – ask yourself ‘Am I treating myself better or worse than I would treat a good friend?’ Don’t be too hard on yourself. Be reverent of your feelings.

Take time with your spouse’s personal belongings – you, and only you, should decide what is done with your spouse’s clothes and personal belongings. Don’t force yourself to go through these things until you are ready. Take your time.

Be compassionate with yourself during special occasions – some days you will miss your spouse more than others. Days and events that held special meaning will emphasize the absence of your spouse.

Treasure your memories – these are the legacies which exist after your spouse dies.

Move toward your grief and heal – to restore your capacity to love, you must grieve when your spouse dies. Remember, grief is a process, and not an event.