

Suggestions to Aid a Partner during Mourning

1. Don't expect your partner to be a tower of strength when he or she is also experiencing grief.
2. Be sensitive to your partner's personality style. In general he or she will approach grief with the same personality habits as they approach life. It may be very private, very open and sharing, or somewhere in between.
3. Find a "sympathetic ear" (not necessarily your partner) – someone who cares and will listen with empathy.
4. Do talk about your loved one with your partner. If necessary set aside time daily when you both agree to talk about the loved one.
5. Seek the help of a counselor if sorrow, depression or problems in your marriage are becoming too big a challenge to face alone.
6. Do not overlook or ignore situations that you find annoying. It is like adding fuel to a fire and eventually there may be an explosion. Try to deal with things as they occur, rather than allowing your emotions and thoughts to 'accumulate'.
7. Remember, you loved your partner enough to commit to a meaningful relationship. Work on keeping your relationship alive by going out for dinner or a coffee, taking a walk, or going on vacation.
8. Be gentle with yourself and your partner.
9. Join a support group for bereaved persons. Attend as a couple, come by yourself or with a friend. It is a good place to learn about grief and to feel understood. Do not pressure your partner to attend with you if it is not his or her preference.
10. Join a mutually agreeable community development/improvement project.
11. Do not blame yourself or your partner for what you were powerless to prevent: this will not help your healing. If you blame yourself or your spouse or for your loved one's death, seek immediate counseling for yourself and your relationship. If you truly were responsible for the death, you may need help to come to terms with that.

12. Realize that you are not alone. There are many bereaved people, both locally and nationally, whose experience you may resonate with. This may help to break your feeling of isolation.
13. Remember that there can be a loss of sexual desire, or, hypersexuality during the grieving process. You can discuss this with your mate.
14. Recognize your extreme sensitivity and vulnerability and be alert to the tendency to take things personally.
15. Read about grief, especially the books written for bereaved persons.
16. Take your time with decisions about your loved one's belongings, and about other changes that may follow the death, e.g. the sale of a residence.
17. Be aware of unrealistic expectations for yourself or your partner.
18. Remember, there is no set timetable for mourning. Everyone goes through grief differently.
19. Try to remember that your partner is doing the best he or she can, in the circumstances.
20. Friction is normal in any partner relationship. Don't blow small issues out of proportion.
21. Try not to let everyday irritants become major issues. Talk about them and try to be patient. Remember that you are using a lot of energy to manage the transition that follows a death and you will have less energy for other parts of your life.
22. Be sensitive to the needs and wishes of your partner as well as your own. Sometimes it is important to find solutions that meet both people's needs and sometimes one person's needs take priority.
23. It is very important to keep the lines of communication open.
24. Work on your own grief instead of wishing that your partner would handle his or her grief differently. You will find that it is enough just to manage your own grief. Remember, when you help yourself move through your mourning, it indirectly helps your partner.
25. As Harriet Schiff states, "Value your partner relationship. You have lost enough."

26. Hold on to HOPE. With time, work and support you will survive. While life will never be the same, you can learn to appreciate life and the people in your life again.

27. Search for joy and laughter.

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