

## **Grief is a normal part of life.**

*Breathe! Hold on to the breath! Exhale!*

Grief is a normal part of life. Grief is the normal, healthy response to loss. Loss is not only the death of a loved one, but can include the loss of health, of a relationship or even some change that has taken place in your life.

Grief is part of the healing process. It is what will help you come to terms with your loss. Grief is not something to get over – it is something to understand and adjust to. It cannot be avoided; you must live through it and experience it. Accepting and feeling your grief will allow you to resolve and grasp the loss into your life. It will help you to embrace the memories of your loved one without the pain of the loss.

The process of dealing with grief is highly individual. It really depends on the nature of the relationship, the circumstances surrounding the death, your emotional support system and your cultural and religious background. Most of the more intense feeling of grief will soften in the months to come, but you may experience emotional highs and lows for a long time.

Grief can come in many different emotions such as anxiety, insecurity, anger, guilt, confusion, fear, depression, relief or many different ones. Acknowledging and expressing your feelings is an important step in the grieving process. Your feelings are not right or wrong – they are yours. These feelings may be strong and could surprise you. This is normal and your feelings will soften over time. Healing is painful but you will feel better as you process your grief.

Everyday you will start feeling better as you begin reorganizing your life without your loved one. You may feel some guilt at times, as you have moved forward with your life. It does not mean that your feelings for your loved one have diminished. It is a normal part of the grieving process and the adjusting to your new life. Most importantly, your love, feelings and memories for your loved one will always be part of you.

Apart from your emotional and spiritual grief, you may find that you have physical symptoms. It can manifest as insomnia, loss of appetite, sensitivity to noise, aches and pains. If these physical symptoms continue, please consult a medical professional. Processing grief takes a lot of physical and emotional energy. It is best to practice self-care such as by getting proper rest, eating balanced meals and engaging in physical activities.

As you are processing your grief, it's best to avoid major changes in your life, or other big decisions. It is best to slow down and find your new normal.

Processing grief is a very personal thing; however, it is important to accept help and comfort from friends and family. Connection is important and can help you feel less alone. Most people want to help, but do not know how. Connecting with your families and friends who will listen and encourage you to share your feelings freely is important.

Some people may find faith or spiritualism a source of comfort. During period of loss, it's natural to search for a meaning to explain your loss and question your beliefs. Finding connection in your spiritual community can be important. It may be helpful to discuss your feelings with a spiritual leader or friend.

Shared experience can also be helpful with your grieving process. Connecting with others who have dealt with loss or taking workshop on dealing with grief. If you do not want to share your grief publically, it can be beneficial to write letters, journaling or even creating a picture book or video. You may want to share photos on social media or place a special photo in an important place in your home.

Remember that grief is a process. As you work through your grief, you will find that with time your feelings do soften in intensity and you are finally able to enjoy gentle memories of your loved one without the pain. When this occurs, you will know that you have processed your grief and have been able to accept the loss into your life.

Always remember – grief is a normal part of life.