

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Thoughts & Feelings

- Talk about the death of your loved one to help yourself understand. You may find that you need to tell the story about what happened several times.
- Allow yourself to have whatever feelings you have. All feelings are valid even if they are uncomfortable or don't seem to make sense.
- Express your feelings by talking, crying, creating something, moving your body, cooking, etc. Whatever feels right for you. Or try something new if you're unsure.
- Keep a journal of your thoughts. Try writing to your loved one.
- Be gentle with yourself. Give yourself permission to move forward in your grief process even if you don't have all the answers about what happened, why, or how.
- It is ok to limit your exposure to and intake of troubling information and images if they do not help you heal.

Health Inside & Out

- Eat healthy foods and try to get plenty of rest and sleep. Sleeping may be hard but resting your body can help.
- Exercise in some way. Try walking fast or for a lengthy time.
- Take a warm leisurely bath.
- Take long slow breaths several times a day.
- Spend some time outside. Observe nature or buildings. Feel the air. Notice the temperature.

Spirituality & Staying Connected

- Pray if it comforts you.
- Talk to your loved one, out loud or in your heart.
- Talk to a spiritual or religious leader.
- Carry or wear an object that belonged to your loved one.

Relationships

- Consider joining a grief support group. Maybe not now but down the road this could be helpful.
- Tell your friends and family what you need. They want to help but may not know how. Ask for help with the laundry or meals.
- Do something to help someone else.
- Seek out caring people. Talk to people who really listen. It's ok to limit time with friends and family who can be hard to be with.
- Share memories of your loved one in person, on the phone, or online.
- Try reading books, articles, and blogs about grief.

Self-care

- Get soft tissues for yourself.
- Put off making major life decisions for at least 6 months. Grief makes it hard to think clearly. Try to give yourself some time.
- Choose what you read or watch carefully. Some TV shows, movies, or books can make your feelings more intense.
- Plan to do things you enjoy. Smiling and laughing while you're grieving is allowed and is healthy.
- Expect that some things may take more energy and time to do.
- Take the time you need to experience and work through your grief. There is no time limit for grieving and you may not feel like you are "over it" one day. You will adapt to living *with it*.

References:

Nordal, PhD., Katherine, C. (2011, March). Grief: coping with the loss of your loved one. American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/topics/grief>.

Bereavement and grief. Mental Health America. Retrieved March 25, 2020. <https://www.mhanational.org/bereavement-and-grief>.

