

Tips for Grievers



- **Say their name** . . . as often as you want.
- **Establish rituals** at family gatherings, or for special dates like birthdays, anniversaries etc.
- **Your grief is your own personal journey** Every grief journey is unique to the griever. Never judge yourself based on another's grief journey
- **We CAN control our own behaviors and emotions with practice**, therefore it IS within our power to choose to process our grief in healthy ways. . . it is always OUR CHOICE to accept help and use it to learn from so we can move forward or stay stuck in the darkness. . . no one can do this for us.
- **Virus Analogy** _ Those who "prepare themselves" ahead of time (good nutrition, immune system..take zai com when exposed etc) fare better than those caught unaware. So if we start investigating what happens after death BEFORE a death occurs, we get through grieving processes easier than those who have no background. Talk about this with those close to you. Learn what you can about the logistics of burial/memorial services available to you in your area. Explore your own spiritual and/or religious beliefs to build your faith practice in what happens to us after death. . . where do we go and what is it like etc.
- **Nature heals:** Time and again I hear folks talk about the healing properties of the natural world around us and I can say, from experience that it is true! Simply walking in nature helps calm frazzled nerves and reduce anxiety. Sitting near moving water (rushing river, crashing waves at the beach etc.) also has a calming yet energizing effect on the body because of the abundance of negative ions produced which helps increase oxygen flow to the brain and also boosts serotonin levels which positively affects our mood.
If you are unable to enjoy nature, find some recordings of natural sounds (not made-made or synthesized nature sounds but actual recordings of trickling water or birds singing) Studies show that simply listening helps in much the same ways.
- **Helping others heals the self:** Offering your time and energy to help someone else in need or in pain actually helps us feel better about our own circumstances. The activity of being in service to another is a heart-opening experience which lets more light into our lives. Just remember to start small so you do not overwhelm yourself or use this as a means to 'avoid' your own feelings.
- **Practice Gratitude:** There are lots of studies proving the benefits of engaging in a gratitude practice. By this I mean actually setting aside a couple moments in each and every day to state out loud the things you are grateful for. Those is early, acute pain from grief will resist this practice as their minds are telling them 'it is not possible to be grateful for anything right now' but I encourage you to try anyway. Most folks find it helpful to do this at the end of each day, just before going to bed. At first, you may only be able to say, "I am grateful I get to go to bed now" Just say it. . . eventually you will be able to add more things to the list ("I laughed today for the first time since he died without feeling guilty")
- **Root out damaging beliefs and replace with healthier ones:** There are also lots of studies around retraining the brain's pathways in order to replace old, damaging beliefs (like: "No one ever gets over the loss of a child" or. . . "I will never be happy again") Our brain will literally believe anything we tell it. . . if we repeat it often enough. So why not make a conscious effort to tell your mind things like: "Even though I feel broken right now, I know that others have found ways to heal themselves and so can I" or. . . "My life will never be the same without _____ but that doesn't mean I can't have a beautiful new life full of love and joy"
- **Exercise:** I think we all are aware of the physical benefits of regular exercise but did you know that we often 'bury' our grief in our bodies? When we try to ignore our grief, distract ourselves from feeling it or outright 'swallow' it down, denying its expression we run the risk of having health problems down the road. All that buried emotion will eventually demand our attention by showing up as a disease, addictions, illness or injury. Regular exercise helps release toxins trapped in the body's tissues and exercising in nature will give you double the benefits (see 'Nature heals' tip above) If you don't have the energy or wear-with-all to go to the gym, then small walks and gentle stretching practices like yoga will serve you just as well.
- **Creative Expression:** Finding a creative outlet to intentionally process and release some of your grief comes highly recommended by those who are well versed in helping others heal from various traumas. I have used photography for this. Taking my camera with me pretty much everywhere I go has taught me how to find beauty in my surroundings no matter where I am. Journaling, drawing, and painting are other popular ways to express feelings you that you might have difficulty voicing. Once your feelings are on paper or embedded into a new painting, you have essentially released them into the world for transmuting, opening space within you for happier, more healing thoughts and emotions.