

# Grief: Taking Care of Yourself

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- Give yourself permission, time and space to grieve.
- Don't pretend that death doesn't hurt.
- Feel free to protest the "why" of death.
- Don't judge your level of grief and healing by the way others grieve and heal. Instead, be aware of your own needs.
- Know and accept your limitations.
- Respect your spouse's timetable and method of grieving.
- Avoid escaping into loneliness.
- Get rid of imagined guilt and "if onlys."
- Laughter doesn't mean you are being disrespectful to your child's memory.
- Confront the fears of your own death and the death of other loved ones.
- Cry.
- Express your feelings about your child's death in an honest way to people who will understand and not judge you, and who will not be hurt by your honest expression of feelings.
- Seeking professional counseling doesn't mean you are weak, inadequate or crazy.
- Use religion, philosophy, poetry, music, art, gardening, tennis, walks in nature, reading or volunteer work to gain relief and understanding.
- Talk about your experience with both friends who were involved and friends who were not involved with the death.
- Accept that your friends are not perfect. At times they may offer bad advice; none of us is perfect.
- Tell others what you want from them, such as help, emotional support and sharing time with them.
- Keep involved in activities that are fun for you and with people who are special to you. Don't underestimate the effects of small pleasures.
- You may not always want to talk about your child. You can decide when you want to talk and when you don't.
- Be good to yourself. Eat healthy foods and take vitamins.
- Not crying doesn't mean you don't remember.

### To Learn More

- Journey Program  
206-987-2062
- Your child's  
healthcare provider
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers  
206-987-2280 (TTY)

- It is fine to either enjoy being around other people's children or to be uncomfortable.
- Exercise to improve sleep.
- Set small goals.
- Accept others' verbal, non-verbal and physical expressions of caring for you.
- Postpone major decisions, such as selling your home or changing jobs.
- The decision whether or not to have another child is yours alone.
- The question, "How many children do you have?" is a hard one, and you may find yourself answering it in the manner which best fits the situation or your own needs at that time.
- Take a break from intensity and exposure to pain.
- Think about joining a support group. Grief shared can be grief diminished.
- Avoid masking the pain with drugs or alcohol.
- Give yourself permission to backslide.
- You cannot prevent, cure or skip the grief process. The only way out is through.

*The information in this handout is a compilation of excerpts of articles by the following and is reprinted with their permission:*

"Caring for the Caregiver,"  
Barbara Swenson, RN, MS, PNP,  
Seattle, Washington

"Ten Guidelines for Dealing with Grief," TCF, Austin, Texas

"Parent Contact Workshop,"  
Washington State Chapter, NSIDSF