

Grief: Taking Care of Yourself

As you grieve, it is helpful to consider ideas that help you heal. It is also important to learn what gets in the way of your healing and to avoid those things. The following are ideas and thoughts to help you along the way.

How can I help myself to grieve?

- Give yourself permission, time and space to grieve.
 - Do not pretend that death does not hurt.
 - Be free to protest the “why” of death.
 - Be aware of your own needs, try not to compare your level of grief and healing by the way others grieve and heal.
 - Avoid masking the pain with drugs or alcohol.
 - Talk to someone about how to get rid of imagined guilt, like “what if” and “if only.”
 - Confront the fears of your own death, and the death of other loved ones.
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What activities can be helpful as I grieve?

Taking a break from intensity and exposure to pain is important.

Talk. You may not always want to talk about your child. You can decide when you want to talk and when you do not. When you do talk about your child, 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 feelings. Talk about your experience with friends who were involved and friends who were not involved with the death.

Laugh. Know that laughter does not mean you are being disrespectful to your child’s memory.

Cry. Know that not crying does not mean you do not remember.

Eat Healthy. Be good to yourself. Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water.

Exercise. Being active can help you. Being out in nature can help you gain relief, too.

Find Understanding. Use religion, philosophy, poetry, music, art, reading or volunteer work to gain relief and understanding.

Stay Involved. Keep doing activities that are fun for you and with people who are special to you. The small pleasures can make a big difference.

Join a Group. Think about joining a support group. Sharing your grief with others that are grieving can be helpful in your process.

Set Small Goals. You cannot prevent, cure or skip the grief process. The only way out is through. Give yourself permission to go through the grief process at your own pace.

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To Learn More

- Journey Program
206-987-2062
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your 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.



How can I handle grief in my relationships with friends and family?

- Respect your partner's timetable and method of grieving.
- Try to be patient with your friends and family members. At times, they may offer advice that is not helpful; none of us is perfect.
- Pay attention to others' verbal, non-verbal and physical expressions of caring for you.
- Refer your family members to grief support programs. You are not responsible for taking care of their needs.
- It is fine to either enjoy being around other people's children or to be uncomfortable.

How do I make decisions when I am grieving?

- Know that seeking professional counseling does not mean you are weak, inadequate or crazy.
- Tell others what you want from them, such as help, emotional support and sharing time with them.
- The question, "How many children do you have?" is a hard one and you may find yourself answering it in the manner that best fits the situation or your own needs at that time.
- If and when possible, give yourself time for major life changes.

Information is edited from:

- "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 (National Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Foundation)