

# Helping Yourself to Grieve

## *Baptist Burden Bearers*

### ***Understand that you have suffered a devastating injury***

Whenever we go through a traumatic event it affects our entire being in a manner that is comparable to an actual injury. Because of this it will take time and attention to recover, heal and live again.

### ***Allow yourself to grieve in your own way***

No two people grieve alike. Everyone is different and everyone grieves differently. Don't expect your grief journey to follow the same path as someone else.

### ***Take time to mourn***

Mourning is the outward expression of our inward grief. Don't try to "keep a stiff upper lip". Allow your grief to show. Don't deny it to others with a false "I'm doing all right" response. Be honest with yourself and others about your feelings and express your grief with a healthy mourning.

### ***Endure the pain***

There is no way to escape the pain and suffering that comes with grief. In fact the greater the grief the more severe is the pain and suffering that comes with it. You can't ignore it, you can't avoid it and you can't lessen it. Many grieving people try to handle their grief by masking the pain, replacing the pain or even drowning it out. Alcohol, drugs, immoral behavior or even becoming a workaholic will never help. This physical, emotional, mental and spiritual pain must be endured before you can ever recover some sense of a stable life again.

### ***Accept that your life will never be the same again***

Depending on the severity of your loss your life will probably never be the same again. At some point you will have to accept the fact that your loved one is gone, your lifestyle has been destroyed or your dreams and plans have been taken away from you.

### ***Take time to stabilize your life***

Now is not the time to make major decisions or take drastic actions to try and "get your life back". Give yourself time to overcome the initial shock from your loss. However, you can't prolong this "stabilizing time" forever.

### ***Be careful about retreating away from life***

You may want to simply stay in bed with the pillow covering your head and avoid life as much as possible. This is not the way to conquer grief. It may take some time but you have to start picking up the pieces of what's left of your life.

### ***Find someone to serve as a grief caregiver or partner.***

This person is someone that knows you, cares for you and will be there for you at all times. They will be similar to a nurse or a medical caregiver. They will keep a watchful eye on you as you walk together on your grief journey. Reach out to someone if necessary but find someone to fill this role in your life.

### ***Avoid feeling guilty about thoughts and feelings***

Your brain and your entire emotional system have been damaged. You may find yourself with thoughts and feelings that normally would have never been a part of your personality. That doesn't mean that you can act on those thoughts and feelings if they are hurtful to yourself or others. It simply means that you are still functioning in an injured state.

### ***Cry as much as you want to ... and need to***

Tears are God's way of cleansing the heart and the emotions. Don't try and hold them back even if they come at the most inconvenient time such as at work or in some other public place. The tears have to come and the more you let them flow the sooner and better you will heal.

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### ***Laugh when it happens ... and don't feel guilty about it***

The time will come when you will unexpectedly break out in a laugh about some incident or even some thought. Never feel guilty about this. It's a sign that you are making progress with your grief journey. It's a good thing and a necessary thing.

### ***Embrace the object of your grief***

Sometimes you may want to avoid photos, objects or places that remind you of a lost loved one or of the life that you used to have. One important phase of your grief journey is being able to remember, talk about and even find pleasure in the positive things that are related to your loss. Treasure the memories, don't avoid them.

### ***Make allowances for setbacks***

There will be days when you feel like you're reliving the tragic event all over again. You may have an emotional meltdown and the sorrow will feel as intense as it ever was. These *grief bursts* can happen weeks, months or even years after your loss. This is natural. Expect it to happen and don't be discouraged when it occurs.

### ***Keep yourself physically healthy***

Since your mind and body have been injured it's very important to keep yourself in good physical condition. You may not feel like exercising or eating right but the physical body must have what it needs in order for your entire being to recover and be able to live again.

### ***Read about and learn of others that have endured a loss similar to what you have***

There are millions of other people that have experienced what you have gone through. By learning of their story you will acquire encouragement, motivation and hope that someday you will experience life again.

### ***Find someone else that needs help and something to live for***

Your tendency will be to focus on your grief and what you have lost. That's a natural response to grief because you're in a survival mode. However, just as you need someone to walk with you on your journey there are others that you can walk with. There is a basic principle of life established by God at creation that teaches the way to receive is to first give. When you give your time and energy to help someone else then some of the pain and sorrow is released from your heart and transformed into kindness and love for others. Helping others, especially those experiencing the same type of grief that you have, will greatly help heal the pain and sorrow in your own heart.

### ***Treat yourself***

When you endure a tragedy your experience enough negative feelings to last a lifetime. Your mind, body, emotions and spirit need something pleasant to experience. This should be something simple and wholesome. Treating yourself doesn't mean indulging in negative behavior that works against your character. Rather, treating yourself could be an ice cream sundae, a walk in the park, a short fishing excursion or a morning of yard sales.

### ***Draw close to God rather than pull away***

It's all right to ask the question "Why God?" It's natural to feel hurt and confused towards God for allowing you to go through your tragedy. However, instead of pulling away from Him, draw closer to Him, talk to Him and tell Him exactly how you feel. He understands in a way no other person can and He is a great enough God to be able to handle your complaints. Ultimately it is our Heavenly Father that heals our grief and gives meaning and hope back to our lives.