



The Importance of Self-Care for Loss Survivors

The death of your loved one will never be something you merely “get over.” They were special to you, and now your world is changed forever.

It is natural for the process of grieving to be slow and for you to have days where it feels like you are being crushed beneath the weight of your grief. You may want to withdraw, place blame on yourself or someone else, be angry, or have trouble getting out of bed. Keep in mind that grief is not something to be ignored or dealt with lightly.

Grief is hard work, and it can take a lot out of you. As easy as it may be to fall into unhealthy habits, it is crucial that you take care of yourself throughout this difficult time. Here are some suggestions to help you manage grief in a healthy way.

- *Take care of yourself physically* – Try to eat well, exercise, and keep up with your hygiene. Do your best to avoid drugs and alcohol as they can make it more difficult to work through this process and may become a problematic coping mechanism.
- *Get back into a routine* – Your life has been altered in a huge way and it will never be the same. Still, it may be beneficial for you to get “back to normal” as best you can and as soon as possible. Having some sort of structure in your grieving process can help establish a sense of normalcy and even a sense of hope.
- *Do not hold in your feelings* – Talk to people you trust about your feelings, or at least try to put aside some time each day to acknowledge your grief. Aside from talking, there are other methods of release such as poetry, music, writing, painting, dancing, etc. Holding in your feelings and pretending they are not there is not an ideal way to handle your grief, so any outlet that works for you is beneficial.
- *Seek out support* – A loss to suicide is a tremendous loss and a lot to carry on your own. Do not be afraid to ask for help, whether with everyday things like cooking, dishes, and laundry or needing a shoulder to cry on and a kind ear to listen. Often, friends and families want to help but feel helpless – they might be grateful to be given a task that could help you. If you are not comfortable asking your friends or family, there are many other resources: mental health professionals, spiritual advisors, support groups, and helplines.
- *Stay present* – Take this process one day at a time and take each moment as it comes. This allows you to be able to identify, acknowledge, and accept your feelings as they come. Grief following a suicide can feel unpredictable. Keep a journal, practice yoga, or meditate – anything that gives you time to focus on what you are feeling and how you want to handle it.

(continued on reverse side)

- *Accept your limitations* – Some things may be too difficult for you to do right now, whether that is going into the bedroom of your loved one, visiting their grave, or something else. Remember that the process of grief is slow and everyone heals at different a different pace. Do not rush to catch up to others who seem further ahead in their grieving than you are. It is important you respect your own limitations and figure out on your own terms how and when to push past them.
- *Be patient* – You may not be the only person who is affected by this loss. Think about the range of emotions you are feeling and consider that others around you are going through a similar process. Be patient with yourself and with others. Some people will provide you with incredible support. Others simply do not understand what you are going through. If you can, avoid people who tell you how to feel or make you feel badly about how you lost your loved one. There is no right way to grieve and despite the unfortunate stigma still linked to it, “suicide” is not a dirty word. Know your limits and respect them. Learn the limits of others and respect those, too.
- *Allow yourself to feel positive emotions* – Give yourself permission to smile, laugh, and partake in things that bring you joy. These things can relax you and even distract you from the tragedy you have endured, and they are things your loved one would want you to be doing.