

Ways to Cope With Death

If you have lost someone you loved, here are some ways to help you through this difficult time:

- Forgive yourself if there were unresolved issues with your loved one.
- Be patient with the grieving process, and don't try to rush it. Accept that you need to grieve in your own way and in your own time.
- Try to maintain your normal lifestyle. Avoid major life changes in the first year of your loss.
- Try to eat well and exercise. Physical activity releases tension.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men. Alcohol is a depressant that will make you feel worse.
- Join a bereavement or grief support group. The American Cancer Society can help you find one. Just call us at 1-800-227-2345.



Our mission is to improve the lives of people with cancer and their families through advocacy, research, and patient support, to ensure everyone has an opportunity to prevent, find, treat, and survive cancer.



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Coping with the loss of a loved one

Losing someone special can be one of the most painful things you go through. It may be hard to accept your loss, but it's normal to feel emotions, such as pain, fear, sadness, tiredness, and even anger. You may also feel shocked and numb and have trouble voicing how you feel.

Coping with the loss of a loved one takes time. Healing begins when you can face your grief and realize you are not alone. It's important to express your feelings, talk to friends and family for support, and take care of yourself. That includes getting enough sleep, doing things that help you feel better – like walking or dancing, and doing whatever helps you relax – like taking a warm bath or stretching.

Family changes

The death of a loved one can affect your entire family. Each person has their own way of coping. Among the things that can affect how they react to a loss are their culture, spiritual beliefs, and relationships.

While each person feels the loss differently and may have their own way of grieving, family members should try to remain open and honest with each other.

When a family member dies, roles in the family will change. This can be stressful for everyone, so try to be gentle and patient with each other.



Coping With Loss



Losing a parent

The death of a parent can deeply affect you, no matter your age or situation. It's normal to feel pain, fear, and sadness after losing someone who had so much influence on your life. Their death may also cause you to think about your own life.

How you grieve depends on your:

- Age
- Spiritual beliefs
- Previous experience with death
- Relationship with your parent and if the death was expected

Even if they lived to an advanced age, the death of a parent can still come as a shock. Again, allowing yourself to grieve may help you cope with losing someone who has meant so much to you.

Losing a child

The hardest loss a parent can experience is the death of a child.

The death of a child at any age is deeply felt and changes the lives of parents. The death of a young child may leave an emptiness for the family. For the death of an older child or adolescent, parents often have difficult moments because they won't see the child become an independent adult. For the death of an adult child that parents raised and watched grow into an adult, they may feel like they have lost a friend.

After losing a child, both parents might expect to react the same way since they are dealing with the same loss. Still, everyone grieves differently, and you may find it hard to talk about the loss. You may have feelings of anger, depression, and denial. You may grieve because the hopes you had for your child are ended. These losses are painful and will



always be a part of you. However, life still has meaning, and over time, you will find ways to experience happiness again. Make time to talk, cry together, or simply be there for each other.

Losing a spouse or partner

Losing your spouse or partner can leave you with strong emotions, such as sorrow, anger, and loneliness. You may spend all or most of your time thinking about your spouse and being aware they are gone.

You may also be left to raise children alone. Or you may have to deal with money issues. The hardest change may be accepting that the life you planned together will not happen. Now, you have to figure out life on your own after living with a close companion.

In time, you will adjust to your new life and your grief will lessen. As you accept the death and start life without your partner, remember you will always have memories of the life you shared together.

Talking to children about death

When we lose a loved one, it might be hard to comfort others, especially children. Parents sometimes don't talk to their children about death because they think it will upset them. But, talking to your children about death can help them deal with their fears.

Children react to death differently from adults. They may say things that seem odd or out of place. They are just trying to understand and accept what has happened.



How to explain death to children

- Explain what happened in a way they can understand.
- Give clear, simple answers to their questions. It's OK to not have all the answers.
- Let them know that they will still be loved and cared for.
- Show love, support, and consistency. Let them know you will be there to help.
- Share your feelings in a way they can understand. It's OK to let them know you hurt, too.

If you are not coping well while grieving, think about counseling or a support group. Visit the American Cancer Society website at **cancer.org** or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.