

Grief Notes

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Coping with Change by Ron Cunningham, Bereavement Coordinator

Dealing with change after the death of a loved one can be a struggle like nothing one has ever faced before. Often the loss can have us feeling overwhelmed, confused, and grief-stricken. Feeling like we are being forced to make changes in our lives can be especially hard when we have lost someone whose presence was woven into the fabric of those lives.

Here are some ideas that may help with change after the death of a loved one:

- As strange as this might sound, allow yourself to grieve. So many times, we try to “be strong” and “get through it.” Sometimes we believe asking for help is admitting to some kind of failure and that is simply not true. It is normal to experience a wide variety of emotions such as sadness, anger, guilt, and loneliness after the death of a loved one and these may leave us depressed and anxious. It is okay to seek support from friends, family, or a healthcare professional. If you still have your copy of the “My Friend, I Care” booklet, go back and read it again. It is an excellent resource for helping understand the grieving process.
- I am a huge advocate of taking care of yourself. Grieving can be consuming, both physically and emotionally. Take care of yourself and make sure you are getting enough sleep and eating healthily. Find activities that bring you peace and joy or keep you moving in healthy ways.
- We often try to suppress the memories of a loved one after their death because those memories can be painful. I would suggest that instead you find ways to honor them. Strive to keep the memories alive and share them, especially with the younger generations. As they grow older, they will want to know about this person who was important to you.
- The role of caregiver is usually all-consuming and exhausting. A caregiver finds purpose in providing care. When a loved one dies, loss of that purpose leaves a huge hole. We can find ourselves at a loss of what to do with ourselves. Finding a new purpose is easier said than done when our lives have been consumed, perhaps for years, with caregiving. But we will find it exceedingly difficult to move forward until we are willing to discover new ways to find meaning and fulfillment perhaps through hobbies, work, or even helping people around you.

Remember, it is okay to ask for help—change is never easy. There are so many ways to begin healing, but what works for one person may not work for another. Take care of yourself and become involved in life around you. It may take time to be ready for this. Talk about your loved ones. Honor them however you can and never forget that grief, change, and healing are all processes that take time and effort. Know that experiencing strong emotions is normal, but with time, support, and self-care, you will be able to weather this new chapter in your life.