



Coping With Grief While Planning a Funeral and Making Other Arrangements

By colewiebe
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In Grief and Coping with Loss
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Grief is a complex process and is individual to each person. Each individual's coping skills, life experiences, and personality will affect their own method for coping with grief and healing from a loss of a loved one or friend. There are a number of ways for you to grieve in a way that is healthy and works to bring you successfully to healing.

Realize It's Okay to Grieve

While many people have different ways of coping with grief, it's important to realize that grief itself is not an emotion but a process that is full of emotions. These emotions are healthy and legitimate. It's okay to feel these emotions and it's okay to ask for help if you start to feel like you're struggling to cope.

Suppressing grief only causes problems in the long run and without proper handling can lead to worse feelings, like depression or thoughts of hopelessness. Give yourself permission to cry, to be angry, and remember it's not your fault. Some people go through a phase of denial before coming to acceptance and any combination of emotions in varying degrees that can come and go.

Grief Can Have Many Emotions

There's no single emotion to identify grief. It can be a complex, confusing kaleidoscope of emotions including anger, fear, anxiety, emptiness, guilt, sleeplessness, fatigue, numbness or lack of focus, mood swings or a persistent hope the loved one will return. Each of these emotions has a basis for being a part of your grief process and you have to accept that.

Four Types of Grief

The USAA Educational Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization since 1989 provides a breakdown of the four types of grief in their publication, "When a Loved One Dies: Coping With Grief" which is available for a free download on their website. The four types are:

- Anticipatory grief, generally involved with waiting for a loss such as for someone with cancer or a long term illness.
- Disenfranchised grief, a form of loss usually characterized by lack of social acceptance or is not openly recognized. Examples include a miscarriage, stillbirth or disappearance of a loved one with no final resolution, as can be the case for missing persons or soldiers killed overseas without remains recovered.
- Complicated grief, caused by the sudden or traumatic death of a loved one, such as a suicide, crime, natural disaster (earthquake, flood, tornado or other catastrophic weather phenomenon), or even a national tragedy like September 11, 2001 or the Boston Marathon Bombings of 2013.
- Mourning, public acknowledgement of your loss, formally expressed through visitations, funerals, memorial services, graveside visits and other occasions, followed by intense feelings of loss as people return to their lives.

Financial and Legal Concerns After A Loss

There are a number of financial and legal concerns after a loss of a loved one including funeral arrangements, locating important documents such as a will, identification of the deceased, and tax returns to name a few, probate of the estate, and a plethora of financial concerns. Most important to remember is if possible, to share some of this burden with others you trust or delay decisions until you're more emotionally available to do so. If none of those are an option, resources for guiding you through the process can help. The USAA Educational Foundation provides a [detailed breakdown](#) of areas to consider, including important phone numbers.

Behaviors That Can Delay Healing

First and foremost, denying feelings or suppressing them will come out in other ways physically. Other unhealthy ways of grieving include substance abuse or self-medicating through the use of drugs or alcohol. Overworking can also prevent healing as well as compulsive or minimizing behavior.

Remember Grief Takes Time

There's no time limit to grief and the length of time is different for each individual. It's okay for grief to take time to overcome and some forms of grief may always linger to a lesser degree. That being said, if a person starts to manifest signs of depression, it's time to seek professional help.

When Grief Becomes Depression

Grieving can cause changes in body chemistry and lead to depression. It's important to seek treatment if an individual loses interest in activities he or she previously enjoyed, has noticeable physical changes like weight loss and especially if there is any mention of suicide. Even if the person claims to be joking, take it seriously and seek help immediately.

Seeking Resources

There are a number of resources available for coping with grief after a loss. The internet is a fantastic resource for finding help. Family and friends can also provide support and help. A local support group may provide answers to questions and give you the sense that you're not alone in your grief.

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