

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Taking Care of Yourself After a Loss

If someone close to you has died, you may be feeling somewhat detached or disconnected from the world around you. Your emotions may be running the gamut from anger to guilt, and from deep sadness to feeling numb. Your appetite and sleeping patterns may also be disrupted, resulting in temporary malnourishment, nightmares, fatigue and depression.

The intensity and duration of your experience of grief will vary depending on your personality and other circumstances. But one thing is clear: If you are struggling to cope with the loss of a loved one, you are emotionally and physically vulnerable and need to focus more than ever on taking care of yourself.

Be prepared for the fact that some family members or friends may not attach the same importance to what has happened as you do, and may not be able to give you the emotional support that you need. Talk to your doctor or a counselor about coping strategies. Meanwhile, here are some helpful tips:

What to Expect

- You may feel overwhelmed and very fatigued.
- Sleeping patterns are frequently disrupted—you may sleep much more than usual, have difficulty falling asleep and/or awaken frequently.
- You may feel an “emptiness” and feel your life has lost direction.
- Although everyone’s circumstances and reactions are different, you are likely to find yourself returning to more of a routine within four to eight weeks.
- You will gradually be able to remember the person you lost while accepting their death, and will be able to resume full work responsibilities.
- If you find yourself unable to cope, contact a counselor or your doctor.

Healthy Steps

- Limit your caffeine intake.
- Try to stay away from alcohol.
- Don't smoke.
- Try to get plenty of rest and sleep, but don’t oversleep.
- Eat regularly and follow a healthy, balanced diet.
- Exercise several times a week.

Your Environment

- Practice relaxation and meditation.
- Spruce up your home. Keep it tidy and orderly.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Tackle just one thing at a time.
- Break large projects into small tasks.
- Allow sufficient time for each task—you need to achieve small successes without frustration.
- Escape for a while—take a long bath, indulge in time for yourself or share a laugh with a friend.

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- Communicate openly with people close to you.
- Explain what is helpful and what is not.
- Be sensitive to your partner or other loved ones. Remember that everyone handles grief differently.
- Avoid a "who is hurting the most" competition.
- Try not to expect too much from your partner.
- Educate yourselves about the grief process together.
- Consider the gender differences and how men and women handle similar situations.
- Take a short trip to regroup.

Grieving is a difficult, and often very personal process. By taking care of yourself, you'll be able to move through the experience having grown, ready to re-engage in the things and people you enjoy most in life. Remember, you are not alone. Life will become livable again.