

A Dozen Ways You Can Help Yourself Move Forward

HERE ARE 12 STEPS you can take to help you move your grieving forward:

1) Accept Your Uniqueness. — No two people grieve the same way or on the same schedule. Are you comparing yourself with others in a situation like yours? Don't!

2) Allow Your Emotions. — Losing a loved one may raise many emotions you haven't felt or only felt in milder ways — denial, anger, guilt, relief. Accept these more intense emotions.

3) Cry. — If you aren't a crier, this can be a surprise. Weeping is a natural way to ease anguish and release pain. We all need an outlet for pent-up emotions.

4) Reflect. — It's often useful to spend time calmly thinking about your loved one, about their life and about your life with them. Some people just try to "forget." But if you want to eventually reach acceptance in your grief, you need to remember. Some time doing this alone is useful. But if you *only* do it alone, you can end up obsessing. So . . .

5) Share. — Seek out a good listener. Find a compassionate, thoughtful member of your family

or a friend who can help you see that what you're feeling is normal. Attend a support group. If you can't do this, turn to a chaplain or other counselor we can connect you with.

6) Set Goals. — Focus on helping others. Volunteer. Develop new



interests. This can ease loneliness and give your life new meaning and purpose. Explore travel opportunities or further education. Get more involved at work (but don't obsess or overwork).

7) Be Tolerant. — Recognize and accept that you may not feel like the normal "you." "Going through the motions" may often be what you need to do.

8) Prioritize. — Feeling overwhelmed is common. Figure out what's important. For now, put the rest aside.

9) Manage Tasks. — Chop big tasks into their tinier parts. Take satisfaction in conquering each small task. Then move on to the next small one.

10) Explore the Spiritual. — Do you observe a particular religious tradition? In the course of your life, this may have helped you through tough times and highlighted your good times. Turn to these hopes and values in this period of loss to enrich your spiritual life. Pray or meditate. Read. Seek counsel in the shepherds of your faith or system. Worship formally.

11) Stay Hopeful. — If your sorrow is deep, it will ease slowly. Don't give up. Nelson Mandela once said, "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

12) Accept Help. — Perhaps your sorrow is so deep that you feel it will never end. Or you have thoughts of suicide or are otherwise getting out of control. Again, don't give up. Call us . . . *RIGHT NOW!* We will put you in touch with the right professional. ■

What Exactly Is Grief?

ONE DICTIONARY defines grief as "deep sorrow, esp. that caused by someone's death." It can be a reaction to any significant loss in your life. That might be a divorce or breakup, losing a pet, a home foreclosure, or being let go from a job.

As the definition says, though, "someone's death" is a powerful cause. You're reading this newsletter. That likely means you are experiencing grief tied to someone who was, or still is, in hospice or some sort of critical care. On top of that, that "someone" is likely a family member or close friend.

Moreover, given the nature of hospice and critical care, the grieving process has likely already begun. This is called "anticipatory grief." You're feeling the losses you've already experienced as well as thinking of those ahead. Plus, depending on how you react, this may not give you a "head start." You will likely fall back and feel like you're starting over. It's complex.

Bereavement experts like to say that every person's grief is unique. Likewise, every family's patterns or traditions of bereavement are unique. Plus, the term *family* can have a broader meaning. Any tight group that has been close to someone who has died or is dying can be a family — a workplace, a social group, a sports team, or a community (small or large, secular or religious). Now let's add a layer to complicate things:

