

HELPING YOURSELF IN TIMES OF GRIEF

By Donna O'Toole, M.A.

Our task ... is to find the few principles that will calm the infinite anguish of free souls. We must mend what has been torn apart, make justice imaginable again in a world so obviously unjust, give happiness a meaning once more ... It is a superhuman task. But superhuman is the term for tasks (that) take a long time to accomplish, that's all. — Albert Camus

Here are some lanterns to light the path and guide you on your journey through grief. They are guidelines written by path-finders who have traveled through grief before you.

1. **Seek and Accept Support.**

You need acceptance and caring throughout grief. If you lack support, make finding it your first goal. Start with family, friends, or clergy ... or call a local counseling agency or school counselor for advice.

2. **Accept Your Grief.**

Time alone may not heal grief. To work through it you must accept and deal with it. Remember it is a natural healing process. Roll with its tides.

3. **Find Models.**

You may need evidence that survival and growth are possible. Look for someone who can give you this hope. Books and support groups may be good places to begin.

4. **Learn about Grief.**

Many a person who has learned about grief has declared, "I found out I'm not crazy ... I'm grieving." Understanding grief can make it safer and more predictable.

5. **Express It.**

Without expression grief can leave you frozen and stoic. Find someone who can listen to your story – again and again. You may also want to express it privately ... through music, art, poetry or a journal.

6. **Accept Your Feelings.**

Grief has many feelings ... some very intense. Accept them and they will help you learn about yourself and the meaning of your loss. Lock them up inside you and you will lock away parts of yourself.

7. **Pace Yourself.**

Grief takes energy. You may tire easily. A slower pace alternated with periods of diversion and mild exercise will maximize healing. So will good nutrition.

8. **Involve Yourself in Work or Meaningful Activity.**

It can help you maintain direction, control and purpose, and occupy your mind.

9. **Don't Be Afraid to Have Fun.**

Laughter IS good medicine. Allow yourself opportunities for diversion and freshness. Children and pets are great providers of healing. Nurture a friendship with someone who can help you play.

10. **Hitch Your Wagon to a Star.**

Like the song says, "You've got to have hope ... miles and miles of hope ..." Faith is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to go on when fear is present. Healing will come eventually.

Growing Through Grief

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