

Surviving the Early Days of Grief

*The first weeks and months after the death of a loved one are tough. Here are a few survival tips. Remember, there is no right or wrong way. Do what is **best for you** at that moment. Things will get better, but it takes time.*

1. **Safety First** – The ability to think and concentrate is compromised after a loss. Be careful with driving, working in the kitchen or any thinking tasks. Have someone drive you, or if you decide to drive and start crying, pull over until you feel calm enough to proceed.
2. **Focus on Routine & Maintaining Structure** – Following a routine can help your nervous system feel safe and cared for and help regulate emotions. Even if it just keeping regular mealtimes and sleep times.
3. **Get rest** – Grief is exhausting. Try to rest whenever possible, even if it is small naps.
4. **Drink water** – Hydration is essential. Every cell in your body depends on water. A dehydrated body will only contribute to your emotional drain. Aim for 8 to 10 glasses a day.
5. **Breathe** – If you find yourself drifting, take a few deep breaths. The body gets the oxygen it needs from the bottom of the lungs. When we are tense and feeling stressed, our breathing tends to be shallow. Insufficient oxygen stresses the and body can add stress to what you are already feeling. Conscious, deep breaths help you relax and give your system the oxygen required to function normally. Try sighing, take a deep breath and “sigh.”
6. **Self-care** – shower, brush your teeth. Many people forget the basics.
7. **Move your body** – in any way possible. It won't solve anything, but it can make a difference.
8. **Eat** – Many people lose interest, or some overeat. Put small items out where they are visible. You are more likely to grab a handful of nuts or fruit from a bowl on the counter. Eating small meals 4 to 5 times a day can help curb emotional swings by keeping your blood sugar in check.
9. **Get outside** – Get out in nature. Get a breath of fresh air, even if it is sitting outside.
10. **Prioritize yourself** – If you feel you need to step back from work or reduce your hours, consider it.
11. **Say Yes** – to the things you want to do.
12. **Say No** – to the things you don't.
13. **Give yourself permission** – we often feel we have to do things to keep everyone happy around us. Or say yes. Give yourself permission to do as much or as little as you want.
14. **Cry** – Do this as often as you need to. Sometimes we just need a good ugly cry. Tears provide a healthy emotional release. If you are afraid you won't stop, set a timer. When it goes off, get up and move your body, go for a walk even if it is only around the house.
15. **Nurture yourself and find something that soothes you** – take a warm bath, use some lotion, do whatever you do for self-soothing.

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16. **Recognize your thinking skills are reduced.** People often struggle to remember or even understand what you are reading. Write things down. Make lists and stick to short tasks that don't require long periods of concentration. If you keep forgetting appointments, or struggle to understand what you are reading ask someone for help. This is temporary, as you heal your thinking brain will come back online.
17. **Recognize your emotions can swing in extremes** – Our emotions can be all over the map. Don't turn anger on yourself, get your body moving, journal your feelings, talk with someone.
18. **Focus on the next few moments** - take small steps and not focus on the future.
19. **Recognize grief affects every part of your life** – physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual.
20. **Expect people to say and do stupid things** - It is okay to ignore many things people tell you. Rare are people who fully understand what you are going through right now. Divert the conversation to something else, like the weather, if you don't wish to talk.
21. **Make a plan** - If you are going out, especially to a function, make a plan. For example, how to leave if things get to be too much.
22. **Let people help you or ask for help** – It can help you both. People don't know how to support you, give them tasks such as picking up groceries.
23. **Recognize everyone grieves differently & go at your own pace.** Ignore the rules. There is no right or wrong ways to grieve. Do what works for you your way. Be patient with yourself.
24. **Delay major decisions**
25. **Simplify life as much as possible**
26. **Talk with a friend** – Find someone who you are comfortable with.
27. **Focus on small steps** - No matter how difficult things may seem, healing does come. Focus on the small stuff; big change will come in time.
28. **Tend to something** – water plants, brush your animals, bake a cake.

Common Experiences

- Fatigue, exhaustion, sleep disturbances, anxiety, loss of appetite, muscle tension, nausea, shock
- A range of emotions, depression, crying, numbness, sadness, mental anguish, feelings of hopelessness, despair, anger, disconnect, irritability, shock, despair, fear, guilt, lack of joy. Trouble restraining emotions.
- Trouble concentrations, inability to think clearly, decreased focus and fuzzy thinking.
- Lack of motivation or interest.
- Change in eating habits, weight loss or weight gain.
- Increased susceptibility to illness.
- Aches and pains.
- Increased anxiety or panic attacks, inability to deal well with stress.
- Decreased confidence.
- Feeling out of control.

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My circle of support who I can call is.....

Print this and put it in an area where you will see it.

Name & Phone # of support (certain hours)	Name & Phone # of support any hour
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

Canadian Resources for Help

- Kids' 24-hour Help Line – 1-800-688-6868
- Crisis Support (Talk Suicide Canada) – 1-833-456-4566 (24/7) or text 45645 (4pm-midnight ET)
- Text "CONNECT" to 686868
- Connex Ontario – 1-866-531-2600
- Emergency - Call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department
- Visit the resource page on my website for additional resources.
(www.innersojourn.net)