

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR COMPLETING GRIEF WORK

- Don't be afraid to continue talking about your beloved person even though much time has now passed since the death. You have every right to include your memories as a healthy part of your life.
- Continue to maintain a health and physical fitness regimen, eating well and exercising. You will have more energy as you move out into a new world that, hopefully, will become a way of life.
- Realize that you have changed. Don't let others try to put you back into old roles, and be especially aware of your own susceptibility to reengaging them. This will take constant vigilance. When you feel guilt over something you feel you should do, be wary. This is a first sign that pressure is being applied. Head it off quickly.
- Comb your consciousness for any unfinished business you may not have completed with the deceased. Now is the time to deal with it, either in a small "homemade" ritual or by talking it over with a trusted friend. Don't harbor unfinished sequences inside yourself.
- As you move into your newfound identity, allow personal restrictions to ease. If you worry, "What will so-and-so think," do it anyhow. Feel a sense of freedom as you do it. Being outrageous is fun sometimes.
- Plan a ritual to end your grief whenever you feel ready. Instead of being anticlimactic after this length of time, it is most appropriate. Few rituals are offered for grief in the first place. Devise your own.
- Try to recount some of the gains that have come to you during your bereavement... a new-found friend, development of more compassion for others, a new skill or interest. Tallying the gains will help you to offset some of the negative memories.
- Be aware of your new identity and don't be afraid to ask for what you need. You have a right to be your own person and to develop in any direction you choose.
- Remember that you have come through the worst thing that could ever happen and you have survived. You faced the hardest kind of abandonment. After this, you need never fear the unknown again. You've been there and back.
- Be aware that anniversary reactions will sometimes catch you off guard. They pop up when you least expect them and may trigger a whole host of grief reactions. Don't be afraid, you are not relapsing.
- Begin to focus on your new goals. By doing this, you will learn the discipline necessary to put your desires into action and make them happen.
- Accept that you will feel lonely at times. Loneliness is part of the transition of grief. You will miss the roles you used to occupy and will long for things to be the same again. Acknowledge the loneliness until it passes.
- Reach out to others. This is one of the major requirements for establishing your new life. When you reach out, you offer comfort not only to yourself but to others as well. Thousands of people not far from you need the comfort of a friend. Reaching out can benefit mutually.
- Don't try to hurry the grief process or even think of it in terms of time limits. You will move through as you can. Putting pressure on yourself will only make your grief worse.

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