

The first anniversary year has passed

If you find yourself struggling with new waves of grief after having reached the one year mark, you are not alone. This seems to be a common problem we all face.

The first anniversary year has passed. Your First holiday season has gone by. It was a brutally hard time but you got through it... Just barely but you still got through it... The general numbness and feeling out of place was a blessing and a curse...Everything feels so surreal....

Then it is the starting into the second year nothing seems to have changed or has it?

You get home from work everyday just feels like the previous, numbing.... you spend the rest of your time doing nothing at all. You feel paralyzed by grief. You know that your grief journey is a roller coaster -- but this roller coaster has been flying downward for quite some time. Is this what's called complicated grief? You ask yourself "Am I depressed?" It just feels that I can't seem to get a grip on this and everything seems hopeless. Everything feels so heavy! These normal feelings in grief you not crazy or losing it, these are a few of the feeling we get that are normal in this process.

Most people expect to feel better after that first year of bereavement, as if they've reached some sort of significant milestone in their grief journey.

Unfortunately, this is another of those myths about grief that simply does not hold true.

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If you assume that grief will ease as the second year begins, you may soon discover that in many ways it seems much harder now than it did before. You may find yourself feeling even worse and that can seem very unsettling.

Think about it: For anyone grieving a significant loss, particularly when that was a spouse or life partner, the first year is a time of adjusting and learning to survive.

Then comes the second year and, if you're like many of us here, it is even harder than the first, as this is when you are grappling with the harsh reality that your loved one is physically gone forever, along with all the secondary losses that accompany this death, including greatly diminished social support, financial instability or loss of religious faith.

The Bottom line is....Grief has no time limit. And it often makes no 'sense' to your mind. You may tell yourself that you should be 'over it' by now. Well-intentioned friends tell you the same. Reason says that death is inevitable. Mentally, you remind yourself that heaven is real.

Your emotions, however, respond to all sorts of triggers: a song, smell, or time of day. A spoken word, even a look can trigger those feelings of loss and grief. The sensations can be overwhelming.

Here are a few of my suggestive tips to help you deal with those overwhelming emotions.

Accept. Your emotional reactions are real and human. You are normal. Don't force yourself to be or to feel differently - at least for the moment. Don't let others tell you how to feel, but do move on to the next steps. Isolation is your greatest enemy.

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Breathe. Be aware of your body's reactions and help it overcome the lethargy. Deep breaths are calming and allow your body to de-stress. Play your favorite music, preferably something you can sing along with. Lyrics help refocus your thoughts. Also, sway or dance with the music - movement is healing.

Connect. Don't seclude yourself. Grief and depression try to pull you aside and make you feel isolated. Call a loved one or dear friend and meet for lunch or coffee,. Stay connected.

Distract. Purposely plan a get-together, dinner or some other low-key event to help you through the lonely times (holidays, anniversaries, and other memory-triggering events).

Enjoy. Do not let the simple joys of life make you feel guilty. Find ways to add more enjoyment and fun into your life.

Faith. Let this be a time to draw closer to God, to receive His comfort and the solace of spiritual rituals and activity. Prayer, meditation and singing favorite hymns strengthen your faith and reinforce your connection to God.

Finding comfort in little things is an essential key to coping with and overcoming the sense of loss and grief. You have lost a piece of your heart. It may heal over, but the scar will always there.

So the next time you're feeling overwhelmed by loss.... try to remember, a year is not enough. But by adjusting your life and staying connected to your life-lines, you can still continue to cope and work on your acceptance and recovery.

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