



Safe Haven For Widowed
 Giving Comfort and Support
 To All Those
 With Grieving Hearts
 that have lost loved ones.

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Good Grief: Healing from the Pain of Loss



We have all faced loss: the death of a friend, relative or pet; the end of a relationship; the loss of a job, dream, or limb. These losses provoke grief, an emotion that is part of a normal, healthy healing process. Restraining grief can be harmful; addressing it heals.

Many people misunderstand grief. They think crying or showing emotional pain is a sign of weakness. They try to deny grief, but feeling the pain helps the person to cope with the loss and return to normal ways of living.

Responses to grief involve all aspects of one's life: emotional, physical, social, spiritual, and mental. Everyone experiences grief differently and to varying degrees. Common responses to grief include:

- **Disbelief:** Seeing and feeling the loss can be painful, so you may try to protect yourself by denying it. You may feel numb, going into a kind of emotional shock.

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- **Anger:** You may be angry at yourself for not preventing the loss or even angry at the person who died for deserting you. You may blame someone else for not protecting you or your loved ones. You may feel hurt or frustrated with the situation, because you cannot change it.
- **Guilt:** You may blame yourself because you feel you may not have done the right thing. Unresolved conflicts or feelings you never expressed can make you feel guilty.
- **Sadness:** Deep sorrow and a sense of loss may cause uncontrollable tears.
- **Anxiety:** You may feel anxious or panicked. You may feel unable to face the future or to deal with new or frightening situations. You may even think that you're going crazy.
- **Depression:** You may feel isolated, helpless, and hopeless. You may pull away from your friends and family and feel as if no one can help you.
- **Relief:** If you've been expecting the loss for some time, you may feel relieved when it finally happens.

- **Dreams:** Dreaming about the loss may either comfort or upset you, or even both. Dreams may signal an emotional conflict you should try to resolve.

Physical symptoms: You may have trouble sleeping or breathing. Your eating patterns or appetite may change. You may sigh a lot, lack energy, or be restless. You may develop a cold or minor infection, or suffer a more serious illness.

The tasks of mourning

Knowing what to expect after loss can make it easier to cope or to help someone else. Grief and the "tasks of mourning" are normal stages we move through while grieving.

Don't try to rush through or avoid any part of grieving. Mourning is a complicated process. It takes a lot of time to adjust to the changes that result from loss.

Accepting that loss is real is often difficult. Sometimes you can't grasp that it won't be restored. You may pretend the loss is not important. You may even believe you can gain back the lost person or thing.

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However, day by day, week by week, month by month, the absence confronts you, and the loss becomes more and more real. Accepting the full reality of the loss takes time.

Feeling the pain follows accepting the loss. Trying to avoid pain is natural, but only prolongs the process. You may try to cut off your feelings, to keep yourself too busy to feel or think, or to dwell only on pleasant memories. The pain will eventually appear in another form, such as depression or illness. Feeling the pain may be the hardest part of grieving, so receiving help and support from others is essential. Remember, pain is a necessary part of healing.

Releasing the pain through crying helps relieve the sorrow and pain of loss. Laughter works too: it can release tension caused by fear and anger. Releasing pain or anger — either alone or with a friend or counselor — can also help. Whatever you're feeling, express it. Don't hold it in.

Adjusting to the environment can take a long time. Loss changes your social and/or physical situation. You may feel helpless, pull away from others, not face or do what is needed, or not build coping skills.

A period of accepting help and care from others can help you adjust to a new situation and give you time to gather your internal resources. You can develop the skills and goals needed to meet new challenges.

Releasing the attachment means letting go of the emotional energy attached to what was lost. At first, you may feel disloyal. You may think this lessens the meaning of the past. To grow through grief, you can pay attention to these feelings and know they are normal; over time, as you practice letting them go, they will naturally pass. It may help to talk with a friend or counselor about the difficulties of saying a final goodbye. It is also important, and healthy, to treasure memories and feelings that help to maintain a connection to your loved one.

Forming new attachments may help heal the wound of loss. You may build new links to people, activities, or commitments. Don't rush: if you don't deal with your grief first, you may stunt the healing. It's not unusual to fear new attachments because of the risk of feeling loss again.

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It's not uncommon to have doubts about being able to find meaning in new activities or relationships. But new attachments — either strengthening old ties or starting new ones — help restore and maintain your emotional and physical health.

Moving through grief: When you've experienced these steps, is grieving over? Not necessarily, but you can think about your loss without feeling the same strong pain. The loss still is part of your experience but you can live more fully in the present. Your fond memories of what was lost, as well as your growth as an individual that comes from the grieving process, can help enrich your life.

Other hints for coping with loss

Take time to write or draw your thoughts and feelings in a journal. This can help relieve pressures and provide a sense of healing.

Talk out your thoughts and emotions regularly with a trusted friend, support person/group, or professional counselor.

Take care of yourself. Get enough sleep, eat nutritious meals, and get some exercise every day.

If faith is a part of your life, express it in ways that are meaningful to you.

Create a ritual, a memorial, as a special way to honor your loved one and remember the special relationship you had.

Getting help

Almost everyone needs help dealing with grief. Support groups and friends who are good listeners can help in all the stages of grief. In addition, counselors can provide a different outlook and help you to express your feelings.

Inexpensive or free help is available at many mental health centers, churches, synagogues, hospitals, clinics, and employee assistance programs. Here at Safehavenforwidowed.org offer group support for all types of losses related to death and all ages also many resources.

Helping someone else grieve

If someone close to you is grieving, you can help.

Listen without judging or trying to change them. Let them know they're not alone. Accept. Encourage them to talk about their feelings.

Show empathy. Try to understand what they are feeling. It's OK to say that you care and that you are uncertain about how to help and what to say.

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Grief after Suicide



This article provides practical suggestions to help you toward healing under the headings:

Why Suicide?

Initial Shock – this isn't happening!

Anger – Why am I so angry?

Guilt – if only I'd done something more

Relief – I'm almost glad it's over

Stigma – What do I tell people?

Talking to Children

Suicide is not inherited

Looking ahead

Someone close to you has died. Your grief is intensified because the death was a suicide.

The healing process will be painful and often seem unnaturally slow. Understanding your emotions, as well as learning something about suicide in general, may ease your grief.

WHY SUICIDE?

Suicide cuts across all sex, age, and economic barriers. People of all ages complete suicide, men and women as well as young children, the rich as well as the poor. No one is immune to this tragedy.

Why would anyone willingly hasten or cause his or her own death? Mental health professionals who have been searching for years for an answer to that question generally agree that people who took their own lives felt trapped by what they saw as a hopeless situation. Whatever the reality, whatever the emotional support provided, they felt isolated and cut off from life, friendships, etc. Even if no physical illness was present suicide victims felt intense pain, anguish, and hopelessness. John Newer, author of *After Suicide*, says, "He or she probably wasn't choosing death as much as choosing to end this unbearable pain."

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Were there financial burdens that couldn't be met? ...marriage or family problems? ...divorce? ...scholastic goals that weren't achieved? ...loss of a special friendship? ...the death of a close friend or spouse? A combination of these or other circumstances could have precipitated suicide, or it could have been a response to a physiological depression. Although many people face similar problems and overcome them, your loved one could find no solution other than death.

But sometimes there are no apparent causes. No matter how long and hard you search for a reason, you won't be able to answer the "WHY" that haunts you. Each suicide is individual, regardless of the generalizations about the "whys", and there may be no way you will completely understand the suicide victim's thought process.

As you look for answers and understanding, you also need to deal with your feelings of shock, anger and guilt. The intensity of your feelings will depend on how close you were to the deceased and the degree of involvement you had with his or her life. As each suicide is individual, so will your reaction, healing, and coping process be unique. The general observations that follow may help you deal with your grief.

INITIAL SHOCK – THIS ISN'T HAPPENING!

Shock is a first reaction to death. You may feel numb for a while, perhaps unable to follow a normal daily routine. This shock can be healthy, protecting you from the initial pain of the loss, and it may help you get through funeral arrangements and services. It may last a few days or go on for several weeks. Take some time to be alone, if that's what you want, but it is also important to be with other people and to return to your normal routine.

After the initial shock you may feel angry, guilty, and of course, sad. These feelings may overwhelm you all at once, and immediately, or they may surface in the weeks, months, and years ahead. You may handle them well initially only to have them return for no apparent reason. These feelings, and the helplessness that comes with them, will pass. Try to understand and accept the things you feel. It is OK, it is healthy, and it is all part of the healing and coping process.

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ANGER – WHY AM I SO ANGRY?

As a relative or loved one coping with a suicide death, you may experience anger, often directed at the deceased – "How could he do this to me?" If the deceased was receiving psychiatric or medical care you may ask, "Why didn't THEY prevent it? You may find yourself angry with God for "allowing this to happen". The anger may be self-directed – "What could I have done?" or "Why wasn't I there?"

Don't try to deny or hide this anger. It is a natural consequence of the hurt and rejection you feel. If you deny your anger, it will eventually come out in other, possibly more destructive ways and it will prolong the healing process. You need to find someone you can talk to about this feeling – perhaps a close friend or your clergyman. You may need to release your anger physically; take long brisk walks or any exercise that is reasonable for your physical capabilities.

Your anger with the deceased is normal when the manner of death is suicide. The deceased has thrown your emotions into turmoil, and caused pain for you and for others you care about.

Anger with the medical or mental health profession can occur if the suicide victim was receiving treatment or therapy. Though you may have had experience with someone unable to help, the professionals are dedicated and well trained, providing help for many people. These professionals will be the first to recognize that your anger is a valid emotion.

If you're angry with God, share your feelings with a sympathetic clergyman even if you don't have any close religious ties. Hewett says, "If you're ticked off at the Almighty, for His sake, tell Him. God is the only one prepared to handle all your anger."

Don't deny your anger. Talk about it, think about it, and constructively deal with it.

GUILT – IF ONLY I'D DONE SOMETHING MORE

Perhaps the most intense anger you experience will be the way you feel about yourself. This anger is closely linked with feelings of guilt. "But I just talked with him!" "Why didn't I listen?" "If only... I should have..." etc. You'll think of a lot of others.

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If the deceased was someone with whom you had regular close contact, your guilt possibly will be intense. And if the death came as a complete surprise, you will be desperately searching for reasons. A person who completes suicide has usually given out some clues, and as you look back on the last few months (or years) maybe you can now see some hints you missed earlier. You'll wish you'd recognized the problem early enough to do something about it.

Perhaps you were aware of the deceased's suicidal feelings and you did try to help. You may have thought you had because in the time preceding the death you noticed he or she seemed to be feeling a lot better and you relaxed your concern. You need to know it's not uncommon for a suicidal person to feel better once the decision to die has been made. The problem has not been resolved, but the victim has found an answer – suicide.

As you are trying to cope with your guilt feelings, try not to criticize yourself too harshly for your behavior toward the victim while he was alive. Are you now wishing you could have found the right solutions or offered more support?

Thoughts like "I shouldn't have gone to the movie", or "I should have been there", may constantly be running through your head. If you had stayed home, or if you had been with him, the suicide could and possibly would have happened at another time. If you feel your presence at a particular time could have prevented the suicide, you are assuming too much. Of course we all like to think we can help our troubled friends and families, and we do try. But, the person determined to complete suicide is likely to accomplish it.

If you realistically feel there was something you could have done, face it, think about it, and accept it. Your loved one can't be helped any more, and you need to go on with your life. You can learn from, and grow with, your experience.

Some people believe an individual has a right to end his life. The term 'rational suicide' is used to describe a suicide that has been thought about, and planned, perhaps as a way of dealing with a painful terminal illness.

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This is an area of controversy, and whether you accept it or not, what you do need to think about is that the suicide was an individual decision – rational or not. It was his choice, not yours. You may accept this intellectually long before your emotions accept it.

What value does your anger or guilt have in the healing process and beyond? Rather than letting the hurt isolate you, share your time and understanding with someone else who is hurting. You can provide friendship and support. Get involved with others; actively support suicide prevention services in your area, or any worthwhile cause or issue that means something to you.

RELIEF – I'M ALMOST GLAD IT'S OVER

If you were closely involved with the deceased, perhaps his pain and suffering had become an emotional drain for you. You may have felt unfairly burdened, or just exhausted from being involved with an intense situation. Now you may be feeling a sense of relief that you don't have to worry any more, or perhaps relief that the deceased's pain has finally ended. A sense of relief when a difficult situation ends is normal.

When the 'end' is an unhappy one, the relief can still be there, but now it is colored with guilt. Remember, don't expect perfection of yourself, accept your relief and don't let it grow to inappropriate guilt. Remember, too, that the suicide victim saw death as the only relief possible at that particular time.

STIGMA - WHAT DO I TELL PEOPLE?

The stigma or shame, you may think others associate with suicide, stems in part from its historical and religious interpretations. Early Roman and English laws established suicide as a crime because it was thought a person ended his life to avoid paying taxes! Though the Bible itself contains no prohibition against suicide, the early Christian church equated suicide with murder. Today very few laws exist that equate suicide with crime, and those few are rarely invoked.

If your friends seem uncomfortable talking about the death or even being with you, it's most likely the type of discomfort felt when facing death of any kind, or a reaction to your discomfort. And if you're not comfortable relating the circumstances to others, don't. Your close friends will already know.

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Let others simply respond to the death of your loved one. You don't need to share the complete story with those not close to you any more than you would share all the details of a recent surgery with them.

However, it is very important that you do confront the word 'suicide'. Practice thinking, hearing, and saying it. Don't try to do this alone. You need someone, or several people, with whom you can share your feelings. For a few days – possibly a week or two – you may want to isolate yourself and take time to recover by yourself. But don't cut yourself off for too long. Let friends and relatives help you. No one will have any magic answers for you. No one will be able to make you hurt less. But the healing and coping process requires that you talk about your feelings about all the sadness, anger, hurt and guilt you are carrying around inside you.

Friends may provide all the emotional support you need or you may want to join a mutual support group and meet with others who have experienced the suicide of a loved one. They will understand your feelings.

Remember, you may be blaming yourself in some way but there are people who will share your sorrow and help you see things more clearly.

TALKING TO CHILDREN

If the deceased was a parent, or if there are children who were close to the deceased, talking to the children about the death may be one of the most difficult tasks you face. You can't ignore their needs, especially if you are the primary adult in their lives.

By talking to our children about death, we may discover what they know and do not know if they have misconceptions, fears, or worries. We can help them by providing needed information, comfort, and understanding. Talk does not solve all problems, but without talk we are even more limited in our ability to help."

Even very young children will be aware of the death of someone in their lives, and they need an opportunity to ask questions and to get truthful answers. If you're reluctant to talk about suicide what it means and why it happened remember that the children are likely to hear about it from other sources, and their confusion will be intensified if they have not had some communication with you. You will need to let them know that the suicide victim was unhappy without giving the impression that death is the answer to unhappiness.

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You will need to let them know that the deceased felt he had a lot of problems or was ill, without giving them the slightest reason to suspect that they were the cause of the problems or responsible for the illness. They need assurance that YOU will be with them for a long time and that your unhappiness over the death will not be reason for your death.

Older children may be more aware of the circumstances surrounding the death but may be less open about sharing their feelings. They may also feel more responsible than young children and search harder for answers. They may be freer to blame someone, you, for instance.

All children may need some time a few days at most – to think about the death, to probe their feelings, and to formulate their own questions. The young child's natural openness may make it easier for him to talk about the death. An older child's growing sense of maturity may prevent him from sharing feelings.

Some children, regardless of age, won't ask questions at all and you need to encourage communication. As comfortable as it may be for you to 'let it ride', don't do it. Children, like adults, need to talk about and share their feelings about the suicide. Their reactions may be similar to yours. They may seem insensitive or they may show more anger, hurt, and guilt. You need to accept their reactions, whatever they are, even if you don't fully understand them.

If communication with a child is difficult, make it a point to talk with people the child has contact with, especially teachers. Teachers need to know what the child is reacting to and they could help you pinpoint emotional responses that may be emerging, such as a change in behavior at school. They can help you reach the child and provide additional support.

Whether your children are preschool or teen, be honest and listen to what they say as well as to what they do. Make time to be with them. Accept their feelings and share your own. When they ask questions you don't have answers for, don't ignore those questions or make up answers.

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Especially when the death is a suicide, a lot of 'answers' will be "I don't understand either".

Just as you need emotional, non-judgmental support from someone close to you, your children need your support at this time.

SUICIDE IS NOT INHERITED

Suicide may occur more than once within a family, but it is not something that is inherited. In a family, or even among friends, suicide may establish a destructive model or a behavior to imitate. Thoughts of your own suicide are not an uncommon reaction to the suicide of someone you love and may surface immediately, or years later. A fleeting thought now and then shouldn't cause alarm. But extended depression and continuing suicidal thoughts need immediate attention. Don't hesitate to seek out professional help if your problems seem more than you can handle alone.

LOOKING AHEAD

Your grief and sadness will eventually subside, and you will be able to pick up the pieces of your life and rebuild.

There will be times, however, when these feelings will surface very strongly. Holidays or other special times may renew your sadness. Especially for the first year, you'll need to decide if you want to maintain traditions you shared with the deceased or if you want new settings and activities to ease painful memories.

On the anniversary of the death, you may want to be alone, attend church, or observe the day in a manner that means something special to you. You may prefer to spend that time with someone close to you or make plans for a family gathering. You can't avoid these periods of sadness, but whenever possible, try to plan ahead so that they won't be overwhelming. And sometimes, your loneliness and sadness may come back for no special reason. Be prepared to face this also. Ask for help from friends or a counseling service, if you need it. You can't expect to forget, but you will be able to cope.

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Death of a Stepchild



The death of a stepchild sets into motion complex issues that vary from family to family for many different reasons. The length and quality of the marriage and the nature of the biological parent–child relationship play a primary role in the grief that follows. A stepparent may have parented this child for many years and invested as much time and love as any biological parent. On the other hand, there may not have been the necessary time or opportunity to bond with the child. Sometimes personality conflicts make warm relationships impossible, often leaving the stepparent with ambivalent feelings of relief and remorse that further complicate an already difficult situation. In some situations, the stepchild, able to live only with one biological parent's family, may have no established relationship with the other stepparent.

Understanding Grief

When a child dies, it is normal and natural for the people who loved that child to experience some form of grief. These forms may vary and as a consequence grief reactions may differ. Some typical reactions include the following:

- * Crying, loneliness, a feeling of isolation
- * A need to talk about the death and the circumstances surrounding it
- * Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, depression
- * Anger, guilt, blame
- * Loss of appetite, overeating, sleeplessness, irritability
- * Inability to concentrate, comprehend, or remember
- * Loss of goals and aims in life, a sense of desolation about the future

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Death of a Stepchild

Circumstances of the Death:

The circumstances of the death may also influence grief reactions. Each loss, whatever the cause, may bring with it complicating factors. For instance, it may be necessary to cope with a police investigation, trial, or intrusive publicity. In these circumstances, grieving is often put aside while daily coping with such factors is necessary.

A factor affecting stepparent grief may be the issue of who was physically caring for the child at the time of death. Anger and guilt are typical grief reactions but can be heightened when a stepparent is the care giving parent when the death occurs.

Open communication between biological parents and stepparents is extremely important as all parties try to assimilate information and details of the circumstances of the death. This quest for information might be misinterpreted as assigning blame or responsibility but should be recognized as an integral part of the grief experience. Parents, particularly those not physically present at the time of the death, have a need to know exactly what happened. When information is freely shared without prior judgment, misunderstandings may be avoided.

Stepparents May Feel Excluded

A stepparent may feel almost invisible to the spouse, other stepchildren, extended family, friends, clergy, or medical personnel. Stepparents may find themselves excluded from important discussions about medical decisions or funeral arrangements. The assumption appears to be that the stepparent, unlike the biological parent, cannot possibly understand or feel the depth of the loss. Additional pain is felt when others, with no malice intended, fail to acknowledge stepparents or make insensitive remarks. Sympathy cards may not include a stepparent's name. All these things serve to remind stepparents that their pain and concern are often unrecognized, seen as illegitimate, or at best, misunderstood.

Old Feelings May Resurface

Be alert to the possibility that old unresolved emotional issues between the biological parents may become more pronounced after the death, especially if there had been conflicts over the parenting process.

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Death of a Stepchild

On the other hand, the biological parents may have a need at this time to cling together as they struggle with the loss, thus making a stepparent feel further isolated and even threatened. This is usually a temporary situation, but one that requires tolerance, restraint, and understanding.

As time passes following the death, a biological parent may feel the need to recall fond memories of the child. Often this is possible only with the help of the other biological parent. The fear of forgetting these memories and the need to recall them are natural and a magnet between the biological parents.

The Marriage Is Tested

A marriage in any family, whether one with biological parents or one involving a stepparent, can experience its most severe test after the death of a child. The emotional distance between spouses can become immense. For many in a blended family, this may be the time for the stepparent to tell the spouse:

- My feeling of helplessness over your agony is almost unbearable.
- I wish I could alleviate some of the depression and mood swings that you are experiencing. I feel useless when my attempts fail. Please tell me that my efforts are appreciated.
- It hurts to know that you sometimes feel there is nothing to live for; that the best is over; that our marriage is not enough to make you want to go on. Let me find the courage to acknowledge your feelings so that we can get beyond them. At least give me the job of listening.
- Even though I “hold myself together” at times to help you through this crisis, I am feeling pain.
- The bond I felt with the child who died couldn't have been stronger if I were a biological parent. Please allow me that deep feeling and acknowledge my love for you and your child.
- Being a stepparent is both a risk and a reward. I need your love and support.
- Please don't shut me out. I care. Please talk to me.

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Death of a Stepchild

Hope for the Future

For stepparents the grief experience may be a precarious journey as they try to balance the needs of their spouses, their own feelings, and other familial relationships. It is a time when patience, understanding and communication are of the utmost importance.

Many stepparents have overcome these obstacles and have found hope for the future through participation in support organizations such as The Compassionate Friends. Sharing feelings and concerns with other parents, in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding, can lessen the feelings of loneliness and isolation experienced by bereaved stepparents.



We Wish

When a family's been torn apart
Some call it "Non-Traditional"
We call it Art

From a family torn asunder
A life of uncertainty and fear
Was born a bond that won't be broken
A love that strengthens through the
years

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Is It Possible to Take a Break from Grief?

Parents cannot choose their children
The choice isn't theirs to decide
We were one of the lucky ones
We got to pick who's by our side

We may not have given birth to you
We were not there from the very start
We may not have raised you from our soul
But we raised you from our hearts

We wish we were there, to kiss you
Goodnight. We wish we were there, to hold
you so tight. We wish we were there, to
gaze into your face.

And wonder why the angels, had come to
this place.

We wish we were there, to tell you, You
captured our hearts and You'll always be
there.

Love and miss you Mom and Dad



Is it possible to take a break from grief?
Stick with me for a moment and let me
explain. Please! I think it's not only
possible at times, but necessary, to take
a break from grief.

I will say, without a doubt, that grief is
one of the most difficult experiences any
of us will face in life. Is it possible to
take a break from grief? Stick with me
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Is It Possible to Take a Break from Grief?

Stop and think. The grieving process is not quick. Its pain is piercing and invades all parts of your life. How long can anyone stand this kind of intensity and penetrating focus without a break?

We all need moments, activities, and experiences to break away and recharge, refresh, restore, revive, and renew ourselves for the journey ahead. Taking a break from grief helps you regain physical strength, emotional courage and determination, and the necessary hope so you can 'keep on keeping on' through your grief journey.

Taking a break from grief will surely mean different things to different people. Taking a break is one of the most respectful things you can do for yourself and your journey. You're actually equipping yourself to carry on and not give up before your grief work is done..

I know you can't just turn grief on and off like flipping a switch—but, in time, you can step back from its full force and allow yourself to focus on a diversion. When you're grieving, grief affects everything around you, but I think that's the key to taking a break. Push grief from center stage to the background for a time.

Taking a break may mean a change of scenery, a 'vacation' away from home. It may mean losing yourself in a book, a movie, or a play. It may mean an enjoyable time with a friend. It may mean an escape into a hobby that consumes your attention and creativity. It may mean spending time and getting caught up in the laughter and wonder of a child or grandchild. It may mean a long-needed rest for your weary mind and body, getting a massage, or visiting a spa retreat.

Whatever you decide, take a break from grief that is meaningful and tailored just for you! Think about what you need and how a particular break will serve you best.

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How Do I Grieve?: Grief Work and TEARS



The most common question I hear in my work with the bereaved is, “How do I grieve?” Though grief is common and all of us will experience it at some point or another, knowing how to deal with grief can be challenging. Many of us fight the emotions of grief, doing whatever it takes to “just be fine again,” even if we’re not. Others of us distract ourselves from our feelings by keeping busy or escaping into activities. And some of us simply ignore the emotions of grief, pretending that everything is “OK”.

So, when someone asks, “How do I grieve?” my counsel is simple: “You have to let yourself grieve.” Usually they reply, “But how do I do that?” And I say, “You just do.”

Grief Work

The “just doing” I am referring to is better known as grief work, or mourning. It is letting oneself go through the emotions and process of grief, for through is the only way out.

One model I find particularly helpful in grief work is **Worden’s Four Tasks**. This model looks at grief work not as emotions or stages to be experienced but rather, as tasks to be worked through. These tasks are:

1. To accept the reality of the loss
2. To experience the pain of grief
3. To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing
4. To withdraw emotional energy and reinvest it in another relationship

1. Accept the reality of the loss

Accepting the reality of the loss can come instantaneously for some, but for most, will take time. Telling one’s “story” in a safe environment—letting oneself think, talk about, and process what has happened—can help.

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How Do I Grieve?: Grief Work and TEARS

Sometimes we have to repeat it over and over to ourselves: “They’re really gone”. But it’s letting ourselves feel the emotions of grief that really solidifies our acceptance of what we have lost.

2. Experience the pain of grief

This is the task people seem to have the hardest time with, and the one most are referring to when they ask me, “How do I grieve?” Many of us fear that if we start feeling the intense mix of emotions inside, we may never get back out of them. Yet, this task is at the core of completing all the others. Letting oneself feel pain is not easy and yet, allowing emotions to arise, to express themselves in healthy ways, is at the core of mourning. As I said before, through is the only way out, “...grief requires us to turn inward, to go deep into the wilderness of our soul.... There is usually no quick way out.”

To encourage this turning inward, and facilitate feeling the emotions of grief, I have created a model I call TEARS. This model shows us how to let ourselves experience grief through 5 different options, each of which is equally helpful in our healing.

TEARS

Talking: While it is natural to want to isolate oneself during the intense pain of loss, most will find healing in talking or even just being with family, friends or other support people, sharing the burden of grief and knowing they are not alone.

Exercise: Physical activity can be a powerful aid in the release of the difficult emotions that accompany loss. Adults and children will find that exercise “allows for a reduction of aggressive feelings, a release of tension and anxiety and a relief of depression” related to grief.

Artistic expression

For many of us, grief is best expressed creatively—through art, music, dance, and so forth. Tapping our creative outlets allows us to process the emotions of grief in a subconscious way that can be powerful and deep. Creativity is particularly valuable for children who are grieving. Encouraging children to express feelings through drawing pictures, creating a collage of photos and written memories, or other creative activities can be a powerful tool for healing.

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How Do I Grieve?": Grief Work and TEARS

Recording emotions & experiences: Creative expression and/or recording one's emotions & experiences through writing or journaling can help release emotions and free the body and soul of them. When we write the things we have seen, heard and feel, we are better able to gain insight and understanding, for it allows us to capture and revisit our experiences, ensuring we do not miss the important lessons being taught.

Sobbing: The bible tells us, "Be afflicted and mourn and weep". There is healing power in allowing our tears to flow for the loss in our lives. As Washington Irving once said, "There is sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness—but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are messengers of over-whelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love."

3. Adjust to the environment in which the deceased is missing

Using the TEARS method to experience our emotions is key in helping us adjust to the environment in which the deceased is missing. Adjustment takes time and comes as we continually work

4. Withdraw emotional energy and reinvest it in another relationship

Eventually, we will feel ready to reinvest in other relationships. This doesn't mean we are "replacing" our loved one; rather, it might mean becoming closer to our living family members, bonding in new ways with old friends or making new friends, or creating new intimate relationships that help us feel healthy and healed. We begin to see that life continues after loss, and hopefully we choose to invest in our new life and relationships even while we carry those we have lost in our hearts.

Dealing with Grief Takes Time

It may take months or even years to get to the place where these tasks feel complete, but that's just the way grief works. My advice is that we continually remind ourselves, "As long as I am working on my grief, the grief work is working".

Give yourself time, space, and all the love you can muster to nurture yourself through the work of grief. It's a challenge, to be sure, but when you really get in there and do the work, it will eventually become easier. One moment at a time. One tear. One smile. One foot in front of the other. And then, one day, we somehow know we are healed.

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“Words From Our Administrator”

Good to see we all made it through another year again on this journey wondering how we did again. This year is our sixth 6th year on the internet giving Bereavement \ Grief support to anyone that has lost a loved one including youths? All types of losses.

We will continue our mission giving support to all worldwide in a secured, safe, confidential environment where no one is judged, discriminated and don't have to be scare to talk for many many years to come. All members, moderators and administers do understand and do get it we all are on this journey together and support eachother through this journey.

Safehavendforwidowed.org now is located on Seven (7) plus different location on the web now reaching out worldwide, giving support in secured, safe environments to all members.

Main Website Safehavenforwidowed.org or Safehavenforwidowed.com

Facebook [SafehavenForWidowed](https://www.facebook.com/SafehavenForWidowed)

Google + [Safehavenforwidowed](https://www.google.com/+Safehavenforwidowed)

Linkedin <https://www.linkedin.com/Safehavenforwidowed>

Manta <http://www.manta.com/c/mx2qvcw/safehaven-for-widowed>

Twitter [Safehavenforwid](https://twitter.com/Safehavenforwid)
YouTube www.youtube.com/user/Safehavenforwidowed

We also this past year added additional rooms totaling 20 now covering a wide range of losses. Also introduced you to Thewidowsvoice Live Call In Radio Broadcasting every Thursday on the internet.

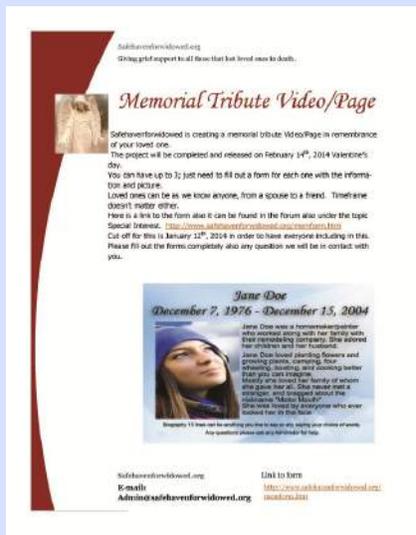
During the first five years we have grown as we all have seen and have yes experienced a lot of changes and seen a lot of things it not only has made us strong as a team by bring on more staff members in the field and now our own IT department of experts who are a great asset to us all maintaining our website and keeping it safe and secured also from those unwanted bots', trolls etc and monitoring the system around the clock behind the webpage \ site.

Also please refer us to anyone you may know that has lost a loved one doesn't have to be widowed to join our website they are all welcome here. We want to wish all of you a peaceful New Year and hope this year will be better too for you and get be better and easier on this journey.

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“Words From Our Administrator”



This is available all the time to new and old members all year round. To view the pages that have been click on In Loving Memory on the main page and click on the Angel you will also like to view. Also your Angel's photo will be shown on the main page with our other Angels for others here to see.

Here is the link in case you don't have it you also get to it by going to the main page on the website under forms. <http://www.safehavenforwidowed.org/memform.htm> at no cost or fees all free and professional done.

Reminder if you would like to have a webpage Tribute in memory of your loved one or loved ones. Made at anytime you can request up to 3 websites by clicking on the menu bar on the page under form and click on the Memorial Webpage Tribute Page filling out the quick form for each tribute you would like done. Also there will be a webpage Tribute on memory of your loved one too so please chose a song you like for each page. A form has to be submitted for each individual one up to 3 request.

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“Words From Our Administrator”

The Director, Assisted Director and I want to thank all the moderators and all the staff here for all the endless hours they have volunteered in keeping Safehavenforwidowed.org and all its locations maintained and supporting and understanding its members through their own grief and hardship. Again we are much honored, proud to have you a part of Safehavenforwidowed.org and sorry for the reason like we all are for being here but we will survive it together we will.

Talk about a family this is a family and a proud family here and will continue to give support to all those that have lost a loved one no matter whom it maybe or where or how forever. All are welcomed here.

Just little reminder on Chatroom Room Etiquette and Procedures.
How to Use Proper Chat Room Etiquette

Do introduce yourself to everyone in the room in the chat room.

1. When a member or a moderator or admin welcomes you into the room acknowledge them they are human give them respect don't be rude our moderators and members at times sit in here for hours alone with no one to talk too and when they say Hi and get no answer does make them feel hurt just like it does us when we say Hi and they are tried up or have walked away from spending hours sitting in here already with no one. Just because they are not properly who you are looking for in there doesn't mean they are not human and don't have feeling's either to don't be rude this is not a grocery store. we are not going to allow this continue either. Members that start or are showing a pattern of this will be banned from the website.
2. Be patient
Try to be patient and wait if a user is slow to respond to you during a conversation. Remember that this is a person and they may have other things to do at the same time.

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“Words From Our Administrator”

Also you can click on their user name on the right column there and see their status it will say if they are available or away in the lower profile\action box on the right side under the user names it will show their current status.

3. Give the room a chance to answer you. Patience is a virtue.
4. If you want to PM someone, that is chat privately, like in an IM, ask first. It is an invasion of privacy to assume that you can open an instant message window with someone you do not know.
5. Typing using CAPS (capitol letters) Typing in all 'CAPS' or capitol letters is usually considered 'shouting 'in text. Many users consider it to be rude to 'shout' in text. Use 'caps' to emphasize words, but try not to type entire sentences in capital letters.
6. Don't make personal attacks\drama on others in the room Personal attacks, drama or negative references to other participants of the room is usually considered to be rude and will probably result in a warning or even a kicked from the room by one of the room moderators or admins.

7. Room moderators and admins rule over the room Challenging the authority of a room moderator or admin, or trying to tell them how to run the room or website is usually **NOT** a good idea. Telling someone how to run the room or the website will usually result in a long lecture or a kick from the room. The proper way to handle this is goto the web pages <http://safehavenforwidowed.org> to forms on the top menu bar an select Suggestions and Feedback fill out the form and then submit. And any complainants you may have regarding a moderator or a staff member all information is private and confidential and has no reflections on you this is your website we to know your suggestions and complainants want to hear them so we can improve and make it better. Nothing is crazy or picky either or bothersome so don't be afraid to suggestion also your ideas.

Other option is in the forum in the Suggestion category which is not private or confidential.

Chat room moderators and admins have certain controls that allow them to control the chat room.

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“Words From Our Administrator”

Figures for the year 2015 here at safehavenforwidowed.org website only this doesn't include the other locations this is only this website. The amount of visitors to the webpage and forum and traffic it receives daily and monthly.

Month	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2014	4264	521856	591378	1.65 GB
Feb 2014	2631	444151	773760	3.77 GB
Mar 2014	3707	430146	786865	4.57 GB
Apr 2014	2742	315993	473787	1.76 GB
May 2014	3150	436842	699309	2.81 GB
Jun 2014	2503	339544	517499	1.37 GB
Jul 2014	2580	299403	438324	2.29 GB
Aug 2014	2529	263554	444219	4.91 GB
Sep 2014	3114	249279	405584	2.25 GB
Oct 2014	4047	254860	298432	3.74 GB
Nov 2014	4681	318648	615536	5.59 GB
Dec 2014	5803	256080	813620	5.91 GB
Total	41751	4130356	6858313	40.64 GB

Figures from 11/19/2009 to 12/25/2014 Yearly Visitors to website

Year	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
2009	721	2201	10431	253.93 MB
2010	5548	8460	57972	1.72 GB
2011	13785	220046	251502	4.67 GB
2012	56274	696111	758338	19.31GB
2013	49616	4960276	5184842	14.72 GB
2014	47151	4130356	6858313	40.64 GB
Total	173095	10017450	13121398	334.99 GB