

Whether you are mourning the loss of a loved one, your own health, or a relationship, don't just sit there, do something!

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COPING WITH LOSS

By Gabriel Constans



Mourning a loss takes time and attention, but you don't have to just sit there and take it. Sometimes grief can cause such lethargy and exhaustion that it may seem impossible to do anything other than get through the day. The irony is that once you get moving, it usually increases your motivation, energy and health.

Once you have taken the time to acknowledge your loss, whatever it may be, feel its full impact and the changes it is causing in your life. You can then find ways to relieve, release, create, explore and honor those feelings.

There are thousands of ways to release the pressure cooker of emotion and suffering during difficult times. You can duplicate these actions in your life or use them as a catalyst for creating your own unique way of coping with grief. The only precaution is that you do them in a safe environment and with people you trust, where you don't have to censure yourself, and where they do not cause others or yourself harm.

Get Moving

Walk, run, swim, workout, hike, bicycle, dance, play or listen to music at least two to three times a week by yourself or with others. A man whose sister died in an automobile accident said running every day is what saved his life and made his loss bearable.

Let it Out

Scream, moan, sob, laugh hysterically, sing, or cry aloud, in the shower, on the floor, into a pillow, at the beach, in the woods or with a trusted friend. After the death of her husband, a friend of mine said she would face the ocean and cry and scream for a few minutes every day where no one could hear her.

Relieve Stress

Breathing exercises, visualizations, relaxation, stretching, meditation and yoga have all been shown to relieve stress and anxiety. They also release positive endorphins to help the body heal. After my uncle discovered he was ill, he said deep breathing and yoga helped give him more energy whenever he felt sad or depressed.

Feel your Pain

Relax in a hot tub, bath, shower or sauna and let the emotions seep from your pores and evaporate with the steam. A colleague whose boyfriend suddenly left her said she attended numerous spas and found that she was transformed with a new release and understandings each time.

Honor the Memory

Put together a collage, altar, memory book, treasure box, CD or audio tape. One family made a video of their father before he died, which brought them great comfort in later years. A child I know routinely goes to the memory book she made after her father's death.

Make a Connection

Write, talk, pray, light a candle, burn incense or have a conversation about the person who has passed away or is ill. Many people find that talking about their loss, helps soften the effects of their grief and supports them in maintaining an ongoing healthy relationship and connection with themselves or another.

Take Action

Create a memorial, plant a tree, make a donation, volunteer, start an organization or dedicate an event in memory of your loss. Some people make a point of helping a neighbor or relative, in honor of their loved one. To do so helps them keep the memory alive.

Don't let this list stop you from finding your own unique way of living with the reality of loss. You don't have to ignore or try to get over grief and mourning by avoiding or suppressing it. Use it as a catalyst, or fertilizer, and open the door for change, growth and transformation. GB

Gabriel Constans has been a grief counselor for thirty years and holds a doctorate in Death Education. His writing has appeared in numerous magazines, journals and newspapers in North America, Europe, Africa and Asia. His most recently related book is *"Good Grief: Love, Loss & Laughter"* (Helm Publishing). His novel, *Buddha's Wife*, is being released by Rockway Press this year.