



After the First Year, Then What?

The first year of bereavement brings pain, disbelief, the agony of reality, and many other deep emotions. Many of us may never have experienced these feelings to this degree. Subsequent years are usually not quite as pain-filled. Although you may feel better, you may still be in significant distress. It helps to understand this next period and to learn some skills for coping. It is most helpful if you lessen your expectations on yourself, work on your grief, and hold on to hope. Remember, grief is different for everyone. Your experience is unique, like fingerprints or snowflakes. Everyone grieves differently, so don't compare yourself to others or place yourself on a timetable. Some of the following suggestions/observations may help you.

- Try not to become critical of yourself because you don't meet others' expectations.
- A different level of reality may hit you. You no longer deny the death, but you now face reality and its long term implications.
- If there were concurrent stressors in the first year of grief, some say that the second year can be more difficult.
- It is vital to find a friend or professional with whom you can talk. This is one significant factor that prevents people from sliding into depression.
- Don't expect too much of your family. They too have their hands full with grief.
- It may be the time to develop some new life patterns. If your previous style of grieving has not been helpful, you must be willing to try new approaches. These can include finding friends to talk with, becoming involved in new or once loved activities, developing coping skills, and becoming determined not to get stuck in your grief.
- Don't ignore or minimize your feelings.
- Other events in your life may be complicating your grief (trouble with work, family members or friends). Realize that this happens to many people and deal with one issue at a time.
- You may or may not cry as often as you did at first. When you do cry, realize it is therapeutic. Don't fight the tears.
- Insufficient sleep affects many bereaved people. Getting physical exercise can allow your body to relax and sleep better. It may also be helpful to reduce your intake of caffeine and alcohol.
- Try to find balance in your life between work and recreation including exercise, hobbies, and reading.
- You often hear "Time will heal." Yes, time does soften the hurt a bit, especially if it is spent constructively. Time well spent can include reading, talking, struggling with grief phases and asking for help when needed, being gentle with yourself, lowering your expectations, and spending pleasant times with family and friends.
- Don't be alarmed if depression re-enters your life or appears for the first time. Depression and its recurrence are normal.
- Pride may be one of your greatest stumbling blocks. You may think that you should be doing much better or not want to acknowledge that you need help.
- If you have guilty feelings, it is best to acknowledge and not suppress them. You, and only you, will be able to say to yourself, "I did the best that I could at the time and so did my loved one."
- Friends or family may give you messages such as "You should be over it by now" and "Get on with living". Such statements may lead you to feel misunderstood or abandoned. Find others to talk with who understand.

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- Loneliness may seem to engulf you as you look ahead to a life without your loved one. Find new friends, worthwhile work, and connect with friends from the past. Pleasant memories can help too.
- Why? If the question “Why did my loved one die?” is bothering you, ask it again and again until you can come to terms with it. You may never know why. It may remain a mystery that you choose to let go of when you are ready. Concentrate on your choice to get better.
- Realize that anger may be directed at yourself, your faith, the person who died, or those in the helping profession who did not seem to understand or help. Acknowledging your anger is the first step in releasing its power over you.
- Consider that even though you are struggling with grief; you would rather have had the time with your loved one, than not to have had him/her in your life at all.
- So many of us have been brought up to be independent. We find it difficult to ask for help. Reaching out for help from caring people can make a big difference in working through your grief.
- Set realistic goals for the future. Pinpoint your most acute concerns. Think of all the possible solutions. Choose one solution at a time and implement it.
- Often we panic when feelings of depression resurface. We hate the feeling. Irrationally, we feel that we will remain there. It is important to realize that you have been depressed before and the feeling will again pass.

***Adapted from Hope for Bereaved
4500 Onondaga Blvd.,
Syracuse, NY 14219***

How Do I Know I'm Getting Better?

Although everyone's grief experience is unique, there are ways to measure progress.

Some signs that you are getting better include:

- There is a different kind of sadness, a change from a bitter sadness to a sweet one.
- You are planning for the future by finding rewarding things to do and people to invest in.
- You can talk about your loss without feeling hopeless or helpless. You have memories to share.
- You give yourself permission to “take a break” from grief, to enjoy other aspects of life (and you don't see this as a betrayal of the deceased).
- Nutritional intake and sleep patterns may be getting back to normal.
- The times are more frequent when you feel free from the heaviness of loss and you can enjoy pleasure without guilt.
- You feel you are relating to others.

Your loss will always be a part of you, it makes you the person you are today and the person you will be in the future. Now and again you will be caught up in a resurgence of feelings of grief. This will happen with decreasing frequency as time goes on, but may never cease entirely.



Honoring the Memory of Your Loved One

Over the past year your life may have temporarily lost much of its purpose and meaning as a result of the loss of your loved one. As time passes, you may be starting to get a better grasp on your identity and be feeling more secure. Perhaps you have made new friends or gotten involved in new activities. Your sense of humor may have returned along with the ability to relax and have fun. Enjoying life again does not have to make you feel disloyal to your loved one or their memory. Recovery does not lessen the love you truly have for the deceased. The times when you run across that favorite picture, hear that old tune, or smell that familiar fragrance are opportunities to remember your loved one with happiness and joy.

Although you have made progress in some or all of these areas, there are still days when it seems as though the death was just yesterday. Accept the loss and releasing feelings of grief will help you to heal. However, it does not mean that the pain is gone forever. Grief accompanies all the major events in life. During

special days of the year and special times in your life, you may miss having your loved one at your side. Those times will continue to bring back the pain and sorrow of your loss. These temporary setbacks happen to everyone and are a normal part of the grieving experience.

The following are ways you can honor the memory of your loved one:

- Visit the cemetery or place of remembrance and bring along a flower, note or object that represents your loved one.
- Light a candle in honor of you loved one. This can be done in your home or place of worship.
- Plant a tree or perennial flowers and watch them grow year after year.
- Plan a biodegradable balloon release. Each family member could have their own balloon or release a group of balloons. You could also write a short note to your loved one and attach it to your balloon.



- Write a letter to your loved one telling them what you miss about him/her, also note your accomplishments and what has occurred during the past year.
- Watch home videos or dedicate time to look through photo albums.
- Visit a place where your loved one enjoyed spending time or where many good memories were shared.
- Spend time with family members or friends and share memories or stories about your loved one.

Support Groups Available

The following support groups are offered by Wilson Support Center.

All services are provided at **150 Bennett Road in Cheektowaga.**

- Community Bereavement Group
- Storm Clouds & Rainbows
- Suicide Bereavement Group
- Widows and Widowers
- Adolescent Suicide Support Group
- After a Parent Dies
- Tiniest Angels

To register for our groups or for more information about educational presentations and other special events, please call 901-0289 or visit our website at WilsonSupportCenter.org.





HOSPICE BUFFALO

Bereavement Services
150 Bennett Road
Cheektowaga, NY 14227
Return Service Requested



Thank you for reading The Grief Journal. This is the last issue you will receive.
If you would like to speak with a Grief Counselor, please contact The Bereavement Team at (716) 601-3888.

Second Year Hospice Bereavement Support Group

Support groups may be a lifeline for many of us after the death of our loved one. Support groups can offer a safe, non-threatening place to share our emotions and concerns. They provide an opportunity to meet other people who have had similar experiences and to learn coping skills. **The Year Two Hospice Bereavement Support Group is for people who have lost a loved one in Hospice Care and are in the second year of their grief journey.**

There is no fee or registration required for these groups.

Second Tuesday of each month at **10:30 am - 12 noon**

Wilson Support Center
150 Bennett Road
Cheektowaga, NY 14227

**Thank you for utilizing Hospice Bereavement services.
Please call us at 601-3888 if we can be of assistance.**