



Managing grief: Getting back to being you

Aetna Resources For LivingSM

Loss is part of life. Whether you lose a loved one, pet or relationship, you have to let go of the past and part of the future you planned, too. Grief is the natural response to loss.

Grief is hard

It's hard to cope with grief. For one thing, the feelings are unpredictable. You may feel happy for one second and sad the next. And sometimes sad feelings can sneak up on you. Or you may even have guilt when you're feeling good.

The thing is, there aren't rules for grieving. There's no timetable, step-by-step guide or specific end date. That alone can make grieving difficult.

But there are things you can do to get through this tough time. Here are some tips that may help:

- **Accept your grief.** You may be tempted to ignore your feelings or try to control them. But this can delay your recovery. Instead, admit your feelings. Don't pretend to be "brave." And give yourself permission to cry.
- **Talk about your feelings.** Share your feelings with a trusted friend or family member. Choose someone who will listen without judgment and support you. See if you can find someone who has experienced a similar loss.
- **Keep busy.** Do work that matters to you. But make sure you're not avoiding your feelings all the time. Make time to grieve.
- **Take care of yourself.** Grief is hard on your mind and your body. You may feel you don't care about your health right now. That will change. You're important so take care of yourself.
- **Eat well.** During times of distress, your body needs nourishment more than ever. Healthy food can help you feel better physically and emotionally.
- **Exercise regularly.** Exercise might be the last thing you feel like doing. But moving your body can help reduce stress and boost your mood. Start by aiming small. Even a short walk can make a difference.
- **Deal with guilt.** Guilt often comes with feelings of grief. Know that you did the best you could. Forgive your mistakes. Only hindsight is 20/20. If your guilt won't go away, see a counselor for help.

- 
- **Accept not knowing.** You may have questions about your loss. You've probably asked yourself "why" over and over and have finally realized that you might never get an acceptable answer. Sometimes bad things happen and they don't make sense. If you're having a hard time letting go of the "why," you may want to speak to a counselor or spiritual advisor.
 - **Connect with others who are grieving.** Your old circle of friends may change. Even if it doesn't, you may be drawn to some friends who have been through your experience. Bereaved people sometimes form new groups for friendship and sharing.
 - **Associate with old friends.** Some friends may feel uncomfortable by your presence because they may not know what to say to you. Try to talk and act naturally, but don't avoid the subject of your loss.
 - **Wait to make major decisions.** Loss often involves unwanted or unexpected changes. But your brain is in "survivor mode" during grief. And this can make solving problems hard. Try to put off major changes, such as selling your home or changing jobs.
 - **Record your thoughts in a journal.** If you like to write, journaling can help you deal with your emotions. But if you find you feel worse after journaling, then stop and try another way of getting out your feelings. You can draw, play music or build something.

You're not alone.

Grief is never easy.
But you don't have
to go through it alone.
We can help. Call us
anytime for support
or information.

1-888-AETNA-EAP (1-888-238-6232)

Aetna Resources For LivingSM is the brand name used for products and services offered through the Aetna group of subsidiary companies (Aetna). The EAP is administered by Aetna Behavioral Health, LLC and in California for Knox-Keene plans, Aetna Health of California, Inc. and Health and Human Resources Center, Inc.

All EAP calls are confidential, except as required by law. This material is for informational purposes only. It contains only a partial, general description of programs and services and does not constitute a contract. Information is believed to be accurate as of the production date; however, it is subject to change. For more information about Aetna plans, refer to www.aetna.com.