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| **Dealing With Death, Adult** | Printed on 2021-09-16 |
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**About this topic**

Death happens to all living things at some point in time. Grief is a normal response to the loss of a family member, friend, or pet. It does not matter if the death was a result of a long illness or a sudden accident. The process of grieving may be very painful. It can affect your feelings and your view of life around you. You may feel the physical result of grief too. It may take a long time to work through your grief, before you feel like you have adjusted to normal life again. Losing someone is a sad thing and sadness is a big part of grief. It may seem hard to just go on with life having this grief, but there are healthy ways to cope with it.

**General**

People often talk about moving on after the loss of a loved one. Moving on does not mean to forget the loved one who died. Some people feel to move shows a lack of love or respect for the one who died. In fact, it just shows that the grief has run its course. Grief is a time-limited normal human response to loss. It will take time to heal. With time and support, you will find a new way to live without your loved one in your life.

There are healthy ways to cope with the sadness and grief.

**Deal with your feelings:**

* There is no right or wrong way to grieve. It is only important that you do it without hurting yourself or others.
* Know that it's okay to cry. This is a normal way to let go of strong feelings. Cry alone, cry with a counselor, cry with family or friends.
* Be honest with yourself and admit your feelings. Try to accept that the loss happened. Recognize this is a hard time. Try not to pretend that all is well. This will let others to know their support is needed.
* Talk about how you feel and what you think. Talking about what happened is a healthy way of trying to make sense of your loss. It will help you work toward accepting your life without your loved one.

**Get support from others:**

* Remember, there are still other family members and friends who love you. Don't forget those who are living.
* Get support from other family members and friends who love you. Tell people what you need or what may be helpful. Such as, if being in the house alone is hard, ask someone to spend the night or weekend. If cooking or eating alone is hard, ask for help with meals or go out to eat with friends. If going through clothing or personal items is too painful, ask a close friend to help.
* Draw comfort from your faith. You may find praying, meditating, or talking to a religious adviser helpful.
* Talk to a therapist or grief counselor. This person can help you deal with the strong feelings that go along with grief and loss. Often, friends and family may want to help. They may not have the training to know how in a healthy way.
* Join a support group. You will be able to share feelings and listen to others who have gone through their own loss.

**Activities may be helpful:**

* Reading books on grief and loss may be helpful.
* Do things that you enjoy and are fun. Some people enjoy painting or drawing. Others are drawn to singing, playing a musical instrument, or dancing. Working with your hands, gardening, or doing crafts may appeal to some people. It often feels good to do something to express strong feelings.
* Spend time working with others. Join church or community activities.
* Keep a diary or scrapbook. This is one more way to express strong thoughts and feelings as you deal with grief. It also gives a way to look back as time goes on. You can see how the pain eases and life starts to move on once again.
* Create a memorial. Having some lasting keepsake of a loved one may bring comfort to you. Plant a tree, rose bush, or flowers. Make a garden spot or get a tattoo. Some families create scholarships or make donations to a favorite charity in a loved one's name.

**Plan ahead for hard times:**

* Make plans on how to cope with holidays or anniversaries. These can bring back memories and feelings. Be ready and expect these feelings. Talk to your family and friends as a way to give honor to your loved one.
* Don't be afraid to ask for extra support during these times.

**Avoid self-destructive ways of dealing with your grief.**

* Do not leave or avoid friends and family who love you.
* Don't use alcohol or illegal or prescription drugs to numb strong feelings.
* Avoid overeating or not eating enough.
* Don't gamble or over spend to try and fill the emptiness of loss and grief.
* Put off major life decisions for a while. If a major decision has to be made, talk with a close friend or counselor before making it. Get other views before deciding.
* Don't take anger out on others, physically, emotionally, or verbally.

**When do I need to call the doctor?**

* You have made any attempt to hurt yourself or if you have been doing very risky things with the hope of dying by accident
* You feel life is not worth living or you have thoughts of harming yourself or someone else
* You can’t sleep, eat, or think clearly
* You long to die to be with your loved one
* You blame yourself for the loss
* You keep yourself away from other people
* You show signs of not taking care of yourself. These can be not:
  + Eating
  + Showering
  + Talking to others or getting out of bed
  + Taking needed drugs
  + Going to appointments, work, or school
* You can't trust other people or feel fearful of others
* Your grief does not go away or seems to be getting worse

**Where can I learn more?**

American Psychological Association

<https://apa.org/topic/families/grief>

National Foundation for Cancer Research

<https://www.nfcr.org/blog/10-tips-to-help-you-cope-with-grieving-2021/>

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| **Dealing With the Death of a Pet** | Printed on 2021-09-16 |
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**About this topic**

Pets are often more than just an animal that we own. They become a member of our family and may be our best friend. This close relationship provides us with much enjoyment. It also makes it very hard when we lose a pet to old age, illness, or an accident. The death of a pet can be very sad for people of all ages. It may be a child's first loss of a loved one. Learning how to cope during this time is very important.

**General**

Most often, adults are better able to handle the death of a pet than a child. Here are some things you can do to help a child cope during this tough time.

* Talking to your child about what happened:
  + Share facts in a way that is right for your child. Use your child's age and awareness of what has happened to help you. You may share more with an 8 year old than a 3 year old.
  + Tell the truth. Let your child know your pet was sick and the vet did everything possible. Tell your child the pet was in an accident and was hurt very badly.
  + Use simple words and allow your child to ask questions. This will help you decide how many facts about your pet's death your child can handle.
  + It's OK to say words like death and dying. Avoid telling your child the pet "was put to sleep" as this may scare some children.
* Help your child cope with the pet's death:
  + Your child may be lonely, sad, or angry. Let your child know that the emotions they feel are normal. It is ok to share your own feelings with your child too.
  + Help your child find a way to remember the pet. You may want to have a funeral or ceremony. Maybe you will just want to share memories of your pet together. You may want to make a photo album of pictures or drawings of your pet.
  + Give your child some extra love and hugs during this time. Support your child and talk about their pain when they are ready.

**What problems could happen?**

You or your child may have trouble dealing with your pet's death.

**When do I need to call the doctor?**

* You or your child are having problems with eating or sleeping
* You or your child has thoughts of harming yourself or others

**Helpful tips**

* Let your child's teachers know what has happened. They may help in looking for any changes in your child's behavior.
* Check with your local library for books about pet death. Read these with your child.

**Where can I learn more?**

American Kennel Club

[https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/lifestyle/grieving-a-pet/](https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/lifestyle%20/grieving-a-pet/)

KidsHealth

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/pet_death.html>

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| **How to Tell When Death Is Near** | Printed on 2021-09-16 |
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**About this topic**

Death may happen all of a sudden, like from an accident or medical crisis. Other times, someone may have an illness and a cure is no longer possible. Family members and patients often want to know how they will be able to tell when their loved one is dying. No one knows exactly when another person will die. Doctors and nurses work closely with people at the end of life. They have found there are some signs that often happen as a part of the natural dying process.

By learning more about the process of dying, you may be better able to help your loved one during this time. Remember, not all of these signs will happen to each person.

**General**

Those who are dying tend to let go of senses and body functions in a certain order. This is a normal process. Most often, a dying person loses the desire to eat and drink first. Next, the person often loses the ability to speak and to see. Finally, the sense of hearing and touch are lost.

There are still ways you can help your loved one.

* Offer ice chips or wipe your loved one's mouth with a wet wash cloth. Use a lip balm to keep the lips moist and comfortable.
* Change your loved one's position every few hours. Keep your loved one comfortable. Raise the head of the bed slightly. It may help with breathing. Adjusting your loved one's position or adding pillows for comfort and elevation may help quiet noisy breathing.
* Enjoy any brief times of alertness. It is OK to still talk with your loved one even if they are not responding to you.
* Offer your loved one a warm blanket. Use disposable, waterproof pads to protect the bed.
* Keep your loved one clean. Change bedding as needed. This will keep your loved one comfortable. It will also help to get rid of any unpleasant smells.
* Offer and honor your loved one's desire to speak with clergy or meet other spiritual needs.
* Speak softly and calmly.
* Offer a light massage.

**What are the main signs?**

Your loved one:

* Will have a decreased appetite. They may only eat or drink very small amounts. They may not eat or drink anything. The body systems are shutting down so your loved one has little need or desire for food.
* May sleep most of the time. Remember, even if they appear to be asleep, your loved one may still be able to hear you and feel your touch.
* May not be aware of their surroundings. They may seem confused and restless. They may pull at clothes or sheets. Reassure them, help them know where they are, and remain calm.
* Will have problems breathing. Your loved one may breathe with an irregular pattern or have long pauses between breaths. There may be a lot of secretions in your loved one's mouth and lungs. This can make the breathing very noisy.
* May have an irregular heartbeat. The heart may beat very fast or very slow.
* May stop responding to others around them. They may no longer talk to you or others.
* Will have less urine. If they do go to the bathroom, it may be very dark in color. This is because they are drinking less and the urine is more concentrated. When death is near, your loved one may lose control of urine or stool.
* May have less blood flow to hands, feet, fingers, and toes. These parts will feel cool to touch. They may have a bluish color or be pale. The skin may also have a blotchy, mottled look. Again, as the blood pressure gets lower, the body sends more blood flow to the vital organs, like the heart, brain, lungs, kidneys, and liver, and less to other areas.

**What drugs may be needed?**

Your loved one may still need to take drugs for pain, fever, upset stomach, or other problems. Talk with the doctor about the best way to give these drugs to your loved one.

**Will there be any other care needed?**

Many families choose to work with hospice during this time. A hospice organization can provide physical and emotional support when you are dealing with the potential death of your loved one. Talk with the doctor about hospice.

**Where can I learn more?**

American Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.org/treatment/nearingtheendoflife/nearingtheendoflife/nearing-the-end-of-life-death>

Hospice Foundation of America

<https://hospicefoundation.org/Hospice-Care/Signs-of-Approaching-Death>

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| **When Your Child Dies** | Printed on 2021-09-16 |
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**About this topic**

When your child dies, you are overwhelmed. It is always hard to cope with the death of a child. Things like their age or how they died do not change that. It is just as hard even if you have other children. It is normal to feel grief and all of the many other things that you will feel during this time.

**General**

Grief can affect all parts of your life. It can affect all of these.

**Emotions**

* You may feel shock, pain, sadness, guilt, or worry.
* You may wish you had died instead of your child.
* You may feel angry and this can be directed at anyone, your family, the doctor, or even your child for their death.
* You may even feel relieved, especially if your child has been very sick.
* You may feel very anxious.

**Thoughts**

* It is normal to feel helpless or forgetful.
* You may be very confused or are not able to understand things.
* You may doubt your faith or the things you believed. You may be angry at your higher power.

**Body**

* Some people cry a lot and others only a little or not at all. Some people yell, wail, or are silent as a way to show their grief. All of these are normal.
* You may be very tired, but not able to sleep.
* You may want to eat a lot or not at all.

**Relationships with others**

* Some people want to be around others and other people just want to be left alone.
* Things and people may not seem as important anymore.
* You may feel guilty if you laugh or do something fun.
* It may be hard for you to pay attention to your other children.
* Other people may want you to move through your grief before you are ready.

How do you handle this difficult time in your life? Here are a few tips to help.

* Know that everyone feels grief in their own way. Moms and dads will grieve differently from each other. So will other family members. There is no right way to grieve or amount of time when you are supposed to feel better. Take your time to decide what to do with your child's room and all of their things. You do not have to do anything until you feel ready.
* Take care of yourself. It is still OK to go to the gym, eat healthy food, or get a haircut. It is OK to do the things you normally do. Try not to feel guilty when you take care of yourself. Let others help you with housework, care for your other children, and do errands.
* Other people may not know what to say or may say things that hurt you. They have to deal with how they feel. Think about how you will answer the question when someone asks "How many children do you have?" or says something like "At least you have other children."
* Find someone to talk to. This may be a friend that you trust, counselor, or support group. It is important to have someone to talk with that won't try to fix your problems but will just listen and care for you. It is OK to talk about your child often and speak their name.
* Grief does not go away, but you can be happy again. You will come to a time when you will make this a part of your life and you will be able to feel joy again. Think about how to spend special days like your child's birthday. You may want to share photos or spend the day with family and friends. You may want to spend it alone.

**When do I need to call the doctor?**

* You feel that you do not want to live
* You have thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else
* You can't sleep, eat, or think clearly
* Your grief does not seem to lessen or seems to be getting worse

**Where can I learn more?**

Cancer Net

<http://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/grieving-loss-child>

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| **When Your Parent Dies** | Printed on 2021-09-16 |
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**About this topic**

The death of a parent breaks the very special bond between parent and child. Most people have very strong feelings for their parents, even if our relationship with our parents may not have been perfect. When a parent dies, the entire family is affected. Your whole family will all cope with this death in different ways than you will because each of them had their own relationship with the person who died.

There are some things that only happen when you lose a parent. You may feel like:

* You suddenly must ‘grow up’ and make all the decisions. Your parent is not there to give advice or help you make decisions.
* There are so many things you wish you had said or done. You may realize there were issues you wish you had time to resolve.
* A part of your history is gone. Your parent was most often the one who knew important things of the past.
* Your heart hurts for your children who also lost a grandparent.
* You may grieve for the times when you wish your parent could be with you.

It is always hard to cope with the death of a parent. It may be even harder if your other parent has died. Things like their age or how they died do not change that. It is normal to feel grief and all of the many other things that you will feel during this time.

**General**

Grief can affect all parts of your life. It can affect all of these:

Emotions

* You may feel lost, numb, sad, or guilty. These are all normal and healthy.
* You may be angry and this can be directed at anyone, your family, the doctor, or even your parent for their death.
* You may even feel relieved, especially if your parent has been very sick.
* You may feel very anxious.

Thoughts

* It is normal to feel helpless or be forgetful.
* You may be very confused or not able to understand things.
* You may doubt your faith or the things you believed. You may be angry at your higher power.

Body

* Some people cry a lot and others only a little or not at all. Some people yell, wail, or are silent as a way to show their grief. All of these are normal.
* You may be very tired, but not able to sleep.
* You may want to eat a lot or not at all.
* You may feel very anxious.

Relationships with others

* You may want to be with others who knew your parent well or you may want to be alone.
* Things and people may not seem as important anymore.
* You may feel guilty if you laugh or do something fun.
* Other people may want you to move through your grief before you are ready.

How do you handle this difficult time in your life? Here are a few tips to help.

* Know that everyone feels grief in their own way. There is no right way to grieve or amount of time when you are supposed to feel better. Take your time to decide what to do with your parent’s things. You do not have to do anything until you feel ready.
* Take care of yourself. It is still OK to go to the gym, eat healthy food, or get a haircut. It is OK to do the things you normally do. Try not to feel guilty when you take care of yourself. Let others help you with housework, care for your children, and do errands.
* Other people may not know what to say or may unintentionally say things that hurt you. They have to deal with how they feel.
* Find someone to talk to. This may be a friend that you trust, counselor, or support group. It is important to have someone to talk with that won’t try to fix your problems but will just listen and care for you. It is OK to talk about your parent often and speak their name.
* Grief is still there, even on holidays. In time, you will be happy and feel joy again. Think about how to spend special days like your mother’s day or father’s day. You may want to share photos or spend the day with family and friends. You may want to spend it alone.

**When do I need to call the doctor?**

* You feel that you do not want to live.
* You have thoughts that you could hurt yourself or someone else.
* You can’t sleep, eat, or think clearly.
* Your grief does not seem to lessen or seems to get worse.

**Where can I learn more?**

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

<https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Grief-008.aspx>

Cancer Net

<https://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/managing-emotions/grief-and-loss/helping-grieving-children-and-teenagers>

Kids Health

<https://www.kidshealth.org.nz/bereavement-reactions-age-group>

Victoria State Government

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/grief-and-children>

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