

How To Survive **EARLY GRIEF**

8 SIMPLE ACTS FOR AN UNBEARABLE TIME

1

STAY SAFE

Stay safe. Do it for yourself if you can. Do it for others if you must. If you are driving while crying too hard to see straight, pull over. If you are about to get in the car, help yourself calm down. Distraught driving is dangerous.

2

TEND SOMETHING

Water the plants.
Brush the animals.
Send a care package.

Thinking of others, or giving love, or getting out of yourself for a while can help.

3

GET OUTSIDE

Being outside in a non-human world is a relief. The trees will not ask - "How are you really?" The wind does not care if you cry. There's a lot to be said for being in places that don't need anything from you.

4

DRINK WATER

Crying for months on end is really dehydrating. Please drink water.

Your body needs it.

The first weeks and months after someone you love dies are a world unto their own.
Your usual survival tactics won't work. Words of intended comfort just grate.
Encouragement from others doesn't feel good.

POSITIVE THINKING AND PLATITUDES CAN'T HELP. THEY JUST CAN'T.

5

SHOWER

Really.

You will feel just the tiniest bit better clean.
The same goes for sweeping the floor or any other seemingly tedious or irrelevant task of hygiene.

6

MOVE

Moving your body is likely to bring a little measure of calm. Do yoga, go for a hike, or walk the dog. Even to the end of the block is a good start.

It won't solve anything but movement is good.

7

SAY NO - SAY YES

You can't afford any big drains on your energy, and you can't afford to miss too many ways to replenish it. Say no to people, places, and events that are too much for you. Say an occasional yes to things that bring even a tiny bit of goodness.

8

EAT

Some people eat under stress. Some lose all interest in food. Some experience serious, lasting physical challenges due to their "grief diet." Small doses of healthy, nutrient dense food might be more easily tolerated by your mind and body than full meals.

The core parts of you, the ways you find solace and connection - these have not completely changed, though they may feel irrelevant. Grief pares things down.

YOU MAY JUST NEED TO EXPERIMENT A BIT.

Adding to this list, or creating a whole new one of your own might just provide a road map inside this wholly disorienting time.



REFUGE IN GRIEF

Emotionally Intelligent Grief Support
www.refugeingrief.com

DO THIS NOT THAT

HOW TO HELP A GRIEVING FRIEND

While there is no one perfect way to respond or to support someone you care about, here are some good ground rules.

DON'T

DON'T COMPARE GRIEFS

No one else has experienced their grief.

DON'T FACT CHECK OR CORRECT

Especially in early grief, facts and timelines can be confused.

DON'T MINIMIZE

Even if you might think their grief is out of proportion to the situation.

DON'T GIVE COMPLIMENTS

When someone is in pain, they don't need to be reminded how wonderful they are.

DON'T BE A CHEERLEADER.

When things are dark, it's OK to be dark.

DON'T TALK ABOUT "LATER"

Right now, in this present moment, that future is irrelevant.

DON'T EVANGELIZE

When something has worked for you, it's tempting to prescribe it for others.

DON'T START WITH SOLUTIONS

In most cases, people need to feel heard, not be "fixed."

DO

INSTEAD TRY

ASK QUESTIONS

You can connect by showing curiosity about their experience.

RESPECT THEIR EXPERIENCE

It's not important who's "more" correct.

REMEMBER THIS GRIEF IS THEIRS

Grief belongs to the griever. Your opinions are irrelevant.

TRUST YOUR FRIEND

All the things you love about the person will help them through this experience.

MIRROR THEIR REALITY

When they say, "This sucks," say, "Yes, it does."

STAY IN THE PRESENT MOMENT

Or if the person is talking about the past, join them there.

TRUST THEIR SELF-CARE

They know themselves best. What works for you may not be for them.

GET CONSENT

Before you offer advice or strategies.

SHOW UP. LISTEN. DON'T FIX.

ABOVE ALL, SHOW YOUR LOVE.

Be willing to stand beside the gaping hole that has opened in your friend's life, without flinching or turning away. Your steadiness of presence is the absolute best thing you can give.



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