

NAVIGATING GRIEF

Grief is the natural emotional and physical response to loss. The loss can be the death of a loved one, but grief is also experienced after any loss including health issues, divorce, redundancy, financial instability, death of a pet, major life transition such as retirement or menopause, friendship or moving to a new house. There is no one way or right way to grieve or a set timeframe. Grieving is a process which takes time, and it is essential to care fiercely for your physical and emotional needs during the most intense stages.



WHAT TO EXPECT

Elizabeth Kubler Ross suggested that there can be five stages of grief. Not everyone experiences all the stages and experience is not always linear. Understanding that grief is a process and journey, even something you move in and out of can be helpful to us. The stages are;



denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.



Acceptance does not mean the person or event is forgotten. Instead, it is moving into a state of peace and no longer resisting what is.

Create a grief landscape.

THINGS TO TRY

Creativity can support the grieving process. At some point you may be ready to express the grief you are experiencing through art, such as a collage landscape. Trust the intuition on when or if this would be a healing activity for you to undertake.

Spend regular time in nature consciously aware of your surroundings. Noticing the rhythms and cycles of nature, allowing ourselves to feel loss and renewal, aligning to the natural world.



THINGS TO TRY

Develop a sacred ritual to hold space for grief.

Each day set aside ten minutes to spend in a quiet space at home. Make yourself a pot of your favourite tea, take three deep breaths to ground yourself, light a candle and make space for the grief to be witnessed and held. Sometimes it is useful to place a photo of what you have lost into the space. A blanket is useful to have near you to wrap yourself in if emotion arises.



ASKING FOR HELP

It's not always easy to ask for help, but sometimes people are keen to know what to do

or how to help. Sharing our vulnerability can create truly close bonds.

Mark in a calendar in plans for grief anniversaries.

Ask for help to structure and plan for anniversaries of the loss and 'holidays' such as Christmas. This is self-care and compassion in action. The aim is to support yourself to move through events, which can understandably be deeply emotional and painful, as easily as possible.

ASKING FOR HELP

Know when to seek additional help.

Shock, sadness, guilt, anger, fear, fatigue, nausea, insomnia, body aches, weight changes are some of the many normal symptoms and experiences of grief. We often need some support with this. Sometimes family and friends do not know how to provide comfort when we are grieving, or the symptoms of grief do not lessen or become more intense. In those instances, finding a support group or therapist who specialises in grief and bereavement may be beneficial.



STARTING TO HEAL

Many of us are changed forever by our grief. Sometimes it feels almost disloyal to the person or event that has gone to

move on from it. Perhaps it can be easier to think of it as growing around our grief - learning about our resilience and finding light in the darkest of times. Learning to accept that our moments of deep grieving can be as ephemeral as our moments of deep happiness.

Preserving our memories in different creative forms might be something useful to begin to us as we heal.



USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.cruse.org.uk>
<https://www.mind.org.uk/>
<https://www.dailyom.com>

This was written in collaboration with Kay Turner, (www.anotherlogonthefire.com). If you've found this useful you may find her other work relevant to you too.

Take a look at our website for other Creative Compass Points and experiences - particularly relevant may be 'Preserving Memories'

