

Looking After Your Health Victoria Hospice Bereavement Services

Looking after Your Health

While you are grieving, you may not have the energy to look after yourself; but it's important that you make an effort to do so. You are at greater risk of illness and accident due to stress, fatigue and distraction. You may not be eating or sleeping as you normally would. As much as possible, it's important to eat and sleep regularly. Avoid unhelpful or harmful coping patterns or people.

What May Help:

Take time to notice how connected your body, thoughts, feelings and beliefs are.

General

- Visit your family doctor; inform him or her that you are grieving
- Your energy level will go up and down. Pace yourself.
- Exercise regularly. Choose something you can stick with and enjoy
- This might be a time when you are tempted to use alcohol or drugs to escape the pain of your grief. Be careful in your use of medications, alcohol and other drugs since these can interfere with the natural grieving process

Sleep

- If you have trouble falling or staying asleep –
 - Avoid alcohol and caffeine, and refrain from watching television or engaging in physical exercise in the evening.
 - Try natural remedies such as herbal teas, warm milk, soothing baths, quiet music or relaxation exercises. Prescription medicines can help temporarily or on occasion.
 - You may also find it helpful to change your sleeping habits for awhile (e.g., sleep in a different room or on the other side of the bed; go to bed later; sleep with an extra pillow or a stuffed animal for comfort).
 - Read something light and easy such as a magazine; or recall a favourite scene or trip in as much detail as possible. You may also try “daydreaming”—plan a trip or plot a novel. Just be sure to avoid any activity that is too stimulating.
 - After 30 minutes, get up and do something pleasant and relaxing for a few minutes.
 - If you can't get or return to sleep, let go of any effort to sleep and tell yourself that you are simply going to rest.
- If you are sleeping more than usual –
 - Remind yourself that this can be normal for a grieving person, and that it is temporary.

- As much as possible, limit your activities and responsibilities so as to conserve your energy.
- Notice when or where you feel most sleepy.
- As much as possible, give yourself time for extra sleep: Try to nap or rest as needed.

Eating

- Even if you don't feel hungry, eat small amounts of healthy foods to give you energy. You may also want to add a vitamin or nutritional drink.
- If you feel more hungry than usual, eat healthy snacks and meals such as fruits, nuts and vegetables. Avoid snacking on 'junk food.'
- If making meals is difficult for you, try some ready-made, healthy meals from a grocery store or food catering service. (Victoria Hospice Bereavement Services can provide you with a list of the latter.) Keep some healthy snacks on hand.
- If eating alone is difficult, eat in a different room or sit at a different spot at the table. Accept meal invitations from supportive friends or invite them in for take-out meals. You might consider letting trusted friends know about your difficulties and asking them to help out in any way they can. Think about setting a regular lunch or dinner date with family or friends. For example, this could be once a month or once a week.
- If you have never prepared meals before, contact your local recreational or seniors' centre to ask about cooking classes or sharing kitchens.