

Suggestions to Aid a Marriage Bereaved Families of Ontario-Ottawa-Carleton

1. Don't expect your spouse to be a tower of strength when he or she is also experiencing grief.
2. Be sensitive to your spouse's personality style. In general, he or she will approach grief with the same personality habits as they approach life. This may be in a private manner or open and sharing, or some place in between.
3. Find a "sympathetic ear" (not necessarily our mate)—someone who cares and will listen.
4. Talk about your loved one(s) with your spouse. If necessary, set up a daily time period when you both know that it is time to talk about your loved one(s).
5. Seek professional help of a counselor if depression, grief or problems in your marriage are getting out of hand.
6. Deal with things as they occur. Do not overlook or ignore anger-causing situation. It is like adding fuel to a fire. Eventually there will be an explosion.
7. Remember that you loved each other enough to marry. Try to keep your marriage alive: go out for dinner or an ice cream cone; take a walk; go on a vacation.
8. Be gentle with yourself and with your mate too.
9. Join a support group for bereaved persons. Attend as a couple, come by yourself or with a friend. It is a good place to learn about grief and to feel understood. Do not pressure your spouse to attend with you if it is not his or her preference.
10. Join a mutually agreeable community betterment project.
11. Do not blame yourself or your mate for what you were powerless to prevent. If you feel personally responsible or blame your spouse for your loss, seek immediate counseling for yourself and your marriage.
12. Realize that you are not alone. There are many bereaved people, both locally and nationally.
13. Remember that there can be a loss of sexual desire or hyper-sexuality during the grieving process. You can discuss this with your mate.
14. Recognize your extreme sensitivity and vulnerability and be alert to the tendency to take things personally.
15. Read about grief, especially the books written for bereaved persons.
16. Take your time with decisions about your loved one's things, change of residence, etc.
17. Be aware of unrealistic expectations for yourself or your mate.
18. Remember, there is no timetable. Everyone goes through grief differently.

19. Try to remember that your spouse is doing the best he or she can.
20. Marital friction is a normal part of any marriage. Don't blow it out of proportion at this painful time.
21. Try not to let everyday irritants become major issues. Talk about them and try to be patient.
22. Be sensitive to the needs and wishes of your spouse as well as yourself. Sometimes it is important to compromise.
23. It is very important to keep the lines of communication open.
24. Work on your own grief instead of wishing that your spouse would handle his/her grief differently. You will find that you have enough just handling your own grief. Remember, when you help yourself cope with grief, it indirectly helps your spouse.
25. As one grieving mother stated: "Value your marriage. You have lost enough!"
26. Hold on to Hope. With time, work and support you will survive. Life will never be the same, but you can learn again to appreciate it and the people in your life.
27. Search for joy and laughter.