

The Grieving Person's Bill of Rights

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This piece by Dr. Wolfelt is one of my favorite resources. In it, he helps us to see and normalize many of the things we experience when we are grieving. He also gives us permission to "take charge" of our own grief journey by reminding us and giving us permission to remind others that is it our unique journey.

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As one who is mourning, you have the right to...

1. Experience your own unique grief.

No one will grieve the same way you do. So, when you turn to others for help, don't let them tell you how you should be feeling.

2. Talk about your grief.

Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will let you talk as much as you want, as often as you want.

3. Feel a multitude of emotions.

You will feel many emotions during your grief journey. Some may tell you that feeling angry, for example, is wrong. Don't take these judgmental responses to heart. Instead, find listeners who will accept your feelings without condition.

4. Be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.

Your feelings of loss and sadness can fatigue you. Respect what your body and mind tell you. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. And don't allow others to push you into activities you're not ready for.

5. Experience grief "attacks."

Sometimes, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This can be frightening, but it is normal. Find someone who understands and will let you talk it out.

6. Make use of ritual.

Rituals do more than acknowledge the death of someone. They provide you with support from caring people, as well as a way to mourn.

7. Embrace your spirituality.

If faith is a part of your life, express it. Be with people who understand and support your religious beliefs.

8. Search for meaning.

You may ask, “Why did he or she die? Why this way? Why now?” Some questions may have answers, others don’t. Watch for clichéd responses people may give you, like, “It was God’s will” or “Think of what you have to be thankful for.” These sentiments are not helpful, and you do not have to agree with them.

9. Treasure your memories.

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of a loved one. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring your memories, find others with whom you can share them.

10. Move toward your grief and heal.

Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient with yourself, and avoid people who are impatient with you. Neither you nor those around you should forget that the death of someone loved changes your life forever.



Produced as a part of the Grief Support Group of First Lutheran Church, Galesburg by Chaplain Vince Marolla. If you want to reprint and pass this on, please use this source information.