

Honor Your Departed By Living Fully



The death of a loved one is devastating. You may feel that life holds no further pleasure or interest. But it may help to ask yourself, "What would my loved one want me to do right now?" It's likely that the answer is: "He (or she) would want me to laugh and love again."

Focus on good memories

Science tells us that widows and widowers who remember the good times they had with a life partner are more likely to be happy than those survivors who dwell on the sickness, pain, and weakness a loved one had to go through.

One good way to honor your departed loved one and also mend your hurt is to be [grateful](#) for the years you had together. Focusing on gratitude, rather than the pain of loss, can be difficult. But if you push yourself to do it, you will make it a positive habit.

Accept that grief is unpredictable

Many of us were taught that grief comes in predictable stages, from denial to anger to bargaining to acceptance. New science, however, looks at this model of recovery with [skepticism](#). One group of scientists identified four different, yet common, [grief trajectories](#) that have nothing to do with those stages.

It is normal to be fine one day and, the next, plunged in grief, triggered by seeing a piece of clothing or a cherished artifact. The Mayo Clinic advises those coping with loss to expect these "[anniversary reactions](#)."

Anniversary reactions don't just take place on wedding anniversaries and birthdays. They can also happen on holidays when memories of a shared experience surface. And they can happen at the sight of an object, like an umbrella or ceramic dish, that was important to the departed. Having one of these reactions doesn't mean that you are not healing. It's part of the process.

Sorrow won't drown

You can and should honor your loved one by caring for your body and mind. Our culture encourages us to drown sorrow in a bottle of rum or wine. But those and other substances lead quickly to depression.

Sorrow can't actually be drowned. [Drugrehab.org](#) says "The way we eat, drink, love, and cope with stress, depression, anxiety, and sadness all play a big role in the state our mental health is in. Sometimes, it's necessary to take a step back and ask yourself if you're doing the right thing for you, and not the easiest thing. And when you start to make unhealthy choices, it's important to learn how to be strong enough to make changes."

Do the things you love and do some new things, too

Your loved one would want you to take that trip to Italy that you've always wanted. He would want you to take ballroom dancing lessons. She would want you to study painting.

You can displace a lot of grief simply by learning to do a few of the things that your loved one used to do in your shared life. For instance, if your husband paid all the bills and filed taxes, take an accounting course, and learn to do those things yourself. If your wife made a to-die-for pasta marinara, learn to cook that for yourself.

Traveling is also good grief therapy. Being thrust in a completely new environment awakens your senses and alertness, making you more sensitive to the beauty all around you.

Be sure to do the things you enjoyed doing before your loss. Maybe that's going to the movies or a rousing game of racquetball. Even if you don't take as much pleasure in these things as you did before, they are an important part of the healing process. In time, you will experience the same thrills you had in the past, but you have to [maintain the habit](#) of having fun.

In conclusion, there is no one-size-fits-all way to handle grief. And there's no schedule for recovery. But it can help to remember that, now, you need to enjoy life for two people.

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