



Appendix J: Be Gentle with Yourself (Patient Handout)

Thoughts on Coping with Loss

Grief is a process that takes time, patience, and understanding. There are, however, some things you can do to take some control during this painful time. Your physical health is often the easiest place to begin.

Start by:

- Reducing alcohol, caffeine and sugar intake.
- Drinking enough water each day.
- Eating a healthy diet.
- Getting as much rest as you can.
- Learning to say no to things you don't have energy to do.
- Believing in yourself and your ability to adjust to your loss.
- Participating in some form of physical activity each day.
- Allowing yourself time to mourn.
- Not isolating yourself, i.e., share your pain with a compassionate person or find a counsellor with experience in grief and loss.
- Nurturing yourself, i.e., use art, poetry, meditation, music, journaling, massage, or anything that makes you feel good.
- Talking about your grief, i.e., try to give your sorrow words or write them in a journal. It is healthy to share your memories both happy and sad with people who care.

Additional thoughts

- We have tears for a purpose. Some scientists believe that crying is important to our bodies to relieve the toxins that build up from stress and emotional pain. When we repress our tears it can lead to illness. However it works, experience tells us that crying is healing. If you don't feel comfortable crying in the presence of others, allow time to cry alone. It will relieve the pressure and help you to control your grief in social settings.
- You are the best authority on your grief. Well meaning friends may try to help by keeping you busy or making sure you are never alone. It is important for you to determine for yourself what is best.
- Spend time with people you trust. Try not to isolate yourself with your feelings. Friends who do not judge your behaviour, who allow you to talk about your grief, and who accept your feelings are invaluable.
- Recognize your physical and psychological limitations. Most people experience fatigue during grief. Don't hesitate to excuse yourself from commitments you feel too tired or sad to attend. Avoid situations you believe may cause you stress or anxiety, instead allow time for simple activities that sooth and relax and provide creative outlets of your own choosing. Allow yourself to just 'be'.
- Use all resources that are available to you. If you have a faith or religion that gives you comfort, this is a time to depend on it. Sharing feelings with others, even strangers, who have had similar experiences can give perspective and assure you that you will survive. Grief counselling in groups or individually can assist you in understanding your grief and help you to cope with its manifestations.

Above all, BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF

Source: Living through Loss Counselling Society of BC, adapted May 10, 2010.