



10 more things you should know about grief

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- 1 Some people don't want to go on living.** It's not unusual for a grieving person to say they want to join their loved one. The loneliness is too great. They can't picture a future without them. But usually they just mean their pain feels too great right now. If you are really worried, come straight out and ask them if they mean suicide. Be aware that if a person is not suicidal, asking them will not put the idea in their head. And they will know that you really care.
- 2 People say, "If there's anything I can do just give me a call."** But they probably won't show up. Prepare to be disappointed. But also prepare to be surprised - there may be people, who you least expected, who offer to help or are just there as good listeners.
- 3 People will have an opinion on how you should be doing.** There's no roadmap to follow. But people often want you to 'move on' if you're sad for too long. They never expect your grief to last as long as it does. Or if you're ready for new experiences or relationships, some friends will say it's too soon. Only you can see your grief from the inside.
- 4 It's okay to get angry because people say stupid things.** But it doesn't mean they don't care about you or lack compassion. They think they are saying the right thing to cheer you up and take your grief away – they think this is the right way to help you feel better.
- 5 Don't dispose of the deceased person's possessions too soon.** You may think it will help the grief to go away – but it won't. You may even be urged by your family to do this. They think it will help you 'get over it' quicker. Later, you may just wish you'd kept some stuff but it's too late once it's gone. And don't forget to ask the children if there's anything they would like to keep – you might be surprised what they would choose as an endearing memento.
- 6 Grief can make you afraid of getting close to someone again.** Fear of losing again is very real and scary. Someone once wrote: *"Grief is the price we pay for love."* Another writer expressed it like this: *"If you choose to love, you must also have the courage to grieve."*
- 7 You will not feel better after the funeral.** So don't rush the funeral. Take your time to plan it carefully. It can take some days for the protective layers of shock and numbness to begin to wear off. Then you realize the person is never coming home. They will always be missing from your family. Now the reality is starting to sink in, and the grief that goes with it.
- 8 Even when death is expected, it still seems sudden when it happens.** You might think you're prepared but you find nothing can really prepare you for that moment. Even if you've said your goodbyes, you may still wish you'd said or done more.
- 9 People will say, "I know how you feel."** But they don't! They mean well. They even think this is how they show their empathy towards you, but words like this just get added to your list of annoying things that people say when they don't know what to say.
- 10 It's okay to laugh when you're grieving.** It's okay to be relieved after someone has died. It's okay to see the imperfections in your loved one – you're not being disloyal. It's okay to be angry at the dead person for leaving you. It's okay to do and say things that you later think were crazy. This is simply the way we are feeling at the time. Cut yourself some slack. There's no perfect way to grieve. Don't gauge your grief by the way others are doing theirs.

Doris Zagdanski is a leading figure in modern day grief and loss education. Her seminars are included in vocational qualifications in Allied Health, Counselling and Funeral Directing. This Factsheet is used with permission from 'Stuck For Words'. Her books and free factsheets are available at www.allaboutgrief.com