



THE PAIN OF GRIEF

The pain of grief is described as having a broken heart or feeling as if a piece of you is missing. This pain comes from being separated from a person with whom you have a powerful bond.

Consider these concepts and practices:

- *Realize that your reaction is normal.* It is normal to experience strong emotions in response to the death of a beloved person.
- *Give yourself permission to feel as sad as you need to feel, to express being distraught however you need to express it, and to cry as much as you need to cry.*
- *See that the pain of grief follows a rhythm.* Like an ocean wave, it begins to take shape, intensifies, reaches a peak of intensity, then subsides and recedes. Count on the pain coming and going in this way every time – and believe that you will survive the pain.
- *Make the connection* between the pain of grief and how dearly you love person who died.
- *Breath mindfully:* Take three deep, deliberate breaths and be aware in your body that you are breathing (as air moves in and out, notice your chest and abdomen rising and falling).
- *Scan your body:*
 - Sit in a chair, relax and be still
 - Begin at the soles of your feet, take notice, and say to yourself, “I notice the soles of my feet touching the floor.”
 - Move your attention slowly up your body, taking notice at each stop along the way and saying to yourself things like: “I notice my butt sitting on the chair” ... “I notice my back being supported” ... “I notice my arms at my sides and my hands in my lap” ... “I notice my chest moving with each breath” ... “I notice the temperature of the air on my face” ... “I notice the weight of my head” ...
- *Visualize a safe place:*
 - Close your eyes.
 - Visualize a place, real or imagined, that is guaranteed to be a safe place for you.
 - Relax your body—and focus on keeping the scene in your “mind’s eye.”
 - Immerse yourself in being present in that place (imagine what you sense – what you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste).
 - Stay in the scene for 5 or 10 minutes, relaxing your body as you picture it.
 - Slowly end the visualization.
- *Practice affirmative self-talk:*
 - “It is OK to feel as distressed as I feel: I am OK.”
 - “This intensity will subside: I am making it through this.”
 - “This is part of my work. My work has real purpose and meaning.”
 - “Of course I feel distraught: A person just died.”
 - “I am doing my best, and it is good enough.”
 - “This is awful, but it is a reality that this does happen.”

Also consider the analogy between a fever and the pain and of grief. Just as a fever helps heal the body even though it makes a person feel ill, the pain of grief helps people find their way through grief even though it is difficult to bear. And just as a fever needs to be kept within a safe limit, so the pain of grief must have a safe space where it can be expressed and coped with.