

Grief & Stress: Tips for Breaking the Cycle

Have you ever noticed how sometimes your grief journey can either cause more stress or exacerbate the stress you already have? On this unknown journey, we are already faced with our world being forever changed, and can be bombarded with all of these new obstacles we weren't planning for. During this time, it's easy to get lost in and overwhelmed by the crazy mixture that is stress and grief.

Below we give you some tips on how to help manage or rethink some tasks that may have seemed easier before the death of your loved one. Let's see if we can help get you feeling better about some of these things!

Here are some tips that may help you rethink some old habits ...

Exercise

Stressed about school work or work from your job? Research shows that exercise can help you to retain information. Exercise has many other uses such as raising our endorphins in a natural way, releasing some stress held in our bodies, and keeping us feeling good. Please be advised that over-exercising is not a healthy way to deal with stress – there is a happy medium for everything.

Prioritize

Is your to do list getting pretty long? That's a total stressor! Find a system that works for you to prioritize your responsibilities and tasks. Maybe you like to color code, write them in order, or space things out in your planner for designated days. When we have smaller and more manageable lists, our stress can go down while our confidence rises!

Balanced Diet

Do you find yourself overeating? Do you find yourself under-eating? Food is essential to both our bodies and our minds. It can be easy to eat convenient foods, but we see more overall benefits when we fill ourselves with a healthy, balanced diet. You might see improvement in mood, body functions, immune system, brain functions, and much more.

Practice compassion

As a society, we strive to be the best, the fastest and achieve as much as we can in as little time as possible. What happens if we don't meet our goals or the goals others set for us? It can be so beneficial for our stress levels as well as our self-esteem to learn to appreciate our accomplishments and ourselves. When we learn to love and appreciate ourselves, we can become happier and healthier. No one is perfect, so please don't expect perfection. Try this mantra "I am enough, I do enough." Smile and believe it, be kind to yourself!

Reduce or eliminate alcohol and no illegal drugs

Does partying or using drugs and alcohol help you cope? Some might think this is a really nice way to get rid of your problems, but the reality is that they are still there when the drugs and

alcohol are gone. Researchers have also found that these substances can actually delay your grief journey. Our world is very focused on these substances and easily forgets the comfort of good company and other great activities available. Try something new with your friends – go on Groupon to find some new, fun, cheap activity!

Be an individual

Have you been reading books and articles on grief lately? Sometimes they can be really helpful, while other times they may make us think that there is a right or a wrong way to do this “grieving thing”. Be advised: This “grief thing” is a very individualized journey. Take all the books and articles as good information and nice suggestions, but always do what feels right for you.

Get inspired

Do you feel like you may have lost a spark of passion? Reclaim that spark by re-introducing yourself to whatever you are passionate about! It may be a great cause, a fun hobby, or maybe starting a chapter of Students of AMF on your campus. Maybe you want to find a way to memorialize your loved one who died. Find something that makes you feel great and motivates you to be the best “you” you can be.

Need a time out?

Were you ever put on a time out as a kid? The purpose of a time out really is to remove the child from whatever situation is causing them to act out, so they can collect themselves and make better choices. Wow, doesn't that sound like a good idea for adults too? Take some time for yourself when you can see that your anxiety, anger, frustration, stress, etc is rising. Time outs can be watching a favorite TV show, taking a walk, or even going on a little road trip! Take a break from your stress and enjoy this wonderful life.

Pace yourself

Do you feel as though life can get away from you sometimes? In this fast paced world, it can be easy to get swept up in it all. We want instant results! Your grief journey is not going to instantly resolve, even if you try to race through it. Grief takes it's time and so should you. Pace yourself and your expectations of change. Things will be different, but as you keep going through your journey ... you will see change!

Talk to someone

Have you ever tried to keep something in and noticed how it affects you? Take a minute to think about it. Talking about things can be very cathartic. You can choose if that person will be a family member, a friend, a professional, etc. Sometimes just getting things out of our head can bring some light to a situation, or help us to sort things out. Turning to a trusted individual is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength.

Taken from: [Actively Moving Forward®](http://healgrief.org), a young adult and college grief support network (healgrief.org)