

Helpful Tips for Grieving College Students

Many people have heard of the 5 stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance). It used to be thought that once someone would go through these “stages” they would be through with the process of grief. We have now learned that grief is not a process to “get over”, rather a unique journey with a mixture of emotions and reactions. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, but there are some healthy and unhealthy coping strategies. Please continue reading for some suggestions on healthy ways to continue your grief journey.

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Talk about your loved one who died with friends, family and/or a professional.

Grief is truly a journey, requiring time and energy. It is a very unique process and it doesn't have a set amount of time.

Pace yourself. Grief can be hard and tiring. It takes a lot of energy to feel so intensely. Allow yourself plenty of time to do normal everyday activities. Try not to over-schedule yourself, you don't need the added stress. Rest when you can and need to, it's not a sign of weakness.

Try to resist the temptation to “throw yourself” into work, school or other diversions. This leaves too little time for the grief work you need to do for yourself.

Take care of yourself. Give yourself time and space to begin your grief journey. Get enough rest. Eat healthy food. Give yourself a break.

Resist the temptation to use alcohol or drugs. These can interfere with the grieving process or cover it up – not take it away.

If you are religious, contact your place of worship and utilize offered services.

Talk to others who have experienced the death of a loved one. People who have been through grief can empathize with and help support you, and vice versa.

The grief process is an individual experience. Some people like to talk about things while others prefer to grieve by “doing” something. Do what feels right for you.

Express your grief. The best way to work with your grief is to let it out. So how do you let out your emotions? Do you: Cry, scream, and yell? Do you: express your feelings through music, art, poetry, or journaling? Some express themselves with only one or a few trusted people, while others chose to make a display of expression. Do what feels right for you.

Focus on your health. Grief can be a great stress on your body and mind. It can upset sleep patterns, lead to depression, weaken your immune system, and highlight medical problems. See your doctor if you are worried about your symptoms.

Consider getting professional help if you feel overwhelmed, hopeless, or helpless. Seek professional help if you have suicidal thoughts. Grief therapy doesn't have to be long-term. Even if you don't see yourself as the kind of person who would go to therapy, it may be beneficial.

Grief tends to go at it's own rate, so allow yourself time to grieve. There is no right way and no time limit!

Be patient. There may be days where you feel great, but there may also be setbacks. Don't expect to "Get over it" or have a deadline in mind. Reminders can trigger emotions – both physical and emotional. This is not a sign of weakness. Instead, your mind and body are telling you that your grief journey isn't done.

Create your own ways of memorializing your loved one. Celebrate their life in whatever way feels right to you. Try supporting a cause they believed in, start a scholarship, plant a garden, make a donation in their name, etc.

Have a little fun. Do something to make you laugh and/or smile. Many may find this difficult to do at first, but it is wonderful medicine for the grieving soul.

Please know that National Students of AMF Support Network is always here to support grieving college students. You are important to us and we want you to know that you are never alone. We don't expect you to "get over" your grief, but we would love to help you Actively Move Forward in your grief journey!

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