



# The Importance of Self-Care During Grief

Each grief journey is as unique as the individual who walks its path. That being recognized, an aspect of grief that is common to all who grieve is the need for self-care. Grief may be experienced in a variety of ways—emotionally, physically, cognitively, psychologically and even spiritually. The reactions of our minds and bodies to grief can include symptoms such as fatigue, sleep disturbances, appetite changes, mood fluctuations, forgetfulness, loss of concentration and even despair. Coping with all of these potential responses may be overwhelming, but there are some things you can do to manage your grief while continuing to function day-to-day.

## Accept your feelings.

Feelings are neither right nor wrong, they just are. Sadness, loneliness, fear, confusion, anger—these are among the many feelings you may experience, and are completely normal. Emotions are often raw early in the grief process, but it is important to express them. Attempting to stifle feelings usually leads to an emotional outburst at an inconvenient time.

## Be patient with yourself.

Grief is an intensely personal process. Accept that it follows no magic formula or time frame. It will take as long as it takes. Think of the care you would extend to a friend in the same situation of loss, and allow yourself that same grace. Be careful not to take on responsibilities beyond what is realistic. It is better to allow for some flexibility in your obligations during this time.

## Pay attention to physical needs.

It can be very easy to neglect your physical needs while grieving. However, this is a time when taking good care of yourself is crucial. As difficult as it may seem, making every effort to get adequate sleep, eat nutritionally balanced meals and fit in regular exercise and intentional relaxation can do wonders.

By pursuing a healthy routine, you are preparing yourself to take on the new challenges facing you during this difficult time. In addition to these efforts, a check-up with your physician is also recommended. Be certain to make your physician aware that you have experienced a loss.

## Accept the help of others.

Understand that grief is hard work. It requires a great deal of energy and can be exhausting. Even though we place a high value on self-sufficiency, it is important to ask for, and accept, help from those close to you. Others care and genuinely want to be of assistance, but usually do not know what to specifically offer. In particular, it is vital to know who will listen and be supportive. Sharing your story out loud is one key to healing. And, remember that professional guidance is also available.

*Hospice of the Red River Valley has many resources available for the public, on a loan basis, through the resource libraries in each of our offices. Topics include caregiving, terminal illness, dying, death, grief and loss. For more information about grief and loss, visit our website: [www.hrrv.org](http://www.hrrv.org) or call us at (800) 237-4629.*