



Grief, Loss & Bereavement: There Are No Rules by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

It is human nature to want to comfort those we love. It makes us feel better when we can, but the grief process is never about the comforter.

Grief is a deeply personal experience. One person longs to be held and to cry it out. Another may talk and talk about their loved one while still another sets up emotional walls, needing to grieve privately. Some may distance themselves from the entire event until ready to process the wave of emotion that awaits. Some welcome visitors. Others take to their beds for comfort in solitude.

The best we can offer those who are grieving is to recognize and respect their needs, without imposing our own desire to help. Your loved one's timetable will not likely be yours. When in doubt, follow his/her lead. If the bereaved goes off to be alone for a bit, let them. He/she is showing you what they need. Then gently welcome them back when they're ready for company. You might even say, *"I want to give you whatever you need, but I'm not sure what that is. How can I help?"* Each loss is different and each reminds us of every loss we've ever known before. The human spirit knows what to do and eventually, with love and tincture of time, the heart opens to the next chapter of life.

Safety Note: *If the bereaved is deeply depressed over time, entirely detached, or could be unsafe, consult a physician immediately to ascertain if there is a need for professional support to get through this time.*

Suggestions for Someone Who is Grieving:

1. Following loss there can be no rules, nor statute of limitation. Some days, all we can do is cry. Sometimes we can be with others or get out of the house. Other times we need to be alone, or to look through old photos, or to journal our feelings. We may unexpectedly find ourselves laughing when suddenly it strikes us that it seems wrong. It is healthy to experience a full range of emotions. Those moments when we surface from the depths remind us that someday we will smile again. The most healing way to move through grief is with love and support, and at a pace your heart will dictate.

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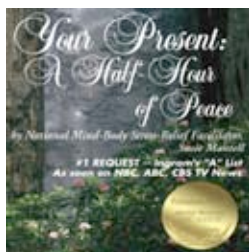
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2. Take care of yourself. Get up, dressed, and outdoors each day if you can. It helps. Think of fresh air and daylight as essential daily nutrients. Nourish and move your body in healthy ways.
3. Writing is great exercise. We rarely feel just one emotion. More often we experience three or more at a time. Write a private "imaginary" letter to someone to whom you wish you could talk to today. This might be a loved one now gone, a spiritual guide, a historic or literary figure. Follow with a few cleansing breaths, then write an imaginary response *to you from* that person. This can be a remarkably powerful and comforting experience.
4. Unfortunately, no magic potion can, nor should, short-circuit the grief process. In some instances however, particularly following trauma, it is appropriate for a physician to prescribe short-term medication, and if so, to then monitor closely over time.
5. You may have a lot to say right now. Find people who will listen, without judgment. Talk things out with a skilled counselor who has expertise in the stages and process of bereavement. This is where you are, for today. You have lost someone or something you cared for deeply. Let your heart lead you for awhile, until one day when you discover that it doesn't ache quite as much as it did today, and you feel ready to open your heart again, smile again, and begin the next leg of the journey.

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