



Self-Care Tips When Grieving

When we think of self-care in grief it may not automatically make sense. How can we take care of ourselves when grief is so overpowering? How can we focus on ourselves when our focus should be on the loss experienced? How can we take care of ourselves when there's a million other things to do? The truth is, there's no more important time for self-care than when we are grieving. It's easy to leave ourselves for last, to focus on our children, on our jobs, on our loss. It may even feel unnatural to think of ways to love ourselves more, but grieving takes a tremendous toll on our minds and body. Like they say on flights, you have to put your mask on first before helping someone else.

In this article we will explore different strategies that can be used to reduce stress, anxiety, and help ground ourselves when feeling overwhelmed by complicated emotions. Self-care is not just about ourselves. It also impacts the way we interact with the world around us. If we have no energy or feeling lost in our grief, then there's little attention left to focus on other aspects of our life. In implementing these strategies, we can regain energy, love, patience and ground ourselves in a more positive way.

The activities presented below can be used daily and have been demonstrated to be effective in helping reduce negative symptoms. We will be discussing three general types of self-care activities and provide example on how to use them.

Mindfulness has become very popular in recent years. It is not only a way to focus our attention on the moment but also a way to get in control of our overwhelming emotions as they're happening. There many different types of mindfulness activities from mindful eating to mindful meditation. One activity that has been widely recommended for children and adults is the rule of 5 that can be used in a moment of an anxiety attack or grief trigger. When we feel triggered it's important we shift our focus to identify 5 things we can see, 4 things we can hear, 3 things we can touch, 2 things we can smell and 1 thing we can taste. This activity involves the use of our senses to get us to focus in the moment and reduce anxious and overpowering emotions.

Managing our breathing not only helps regulate our body but it also helps releases endorphins that are useful in reducing symptoms of anxiety, anger and pain. Breathing techniques can be used any time in any location. One simple breathing exercise is known as the 4-7-8 breathing technique. With this technique it important to start from a comfortable position. We begin by breathing in for 4 seconds, holding our breath for 7 seconds and exhaling for 8 seconds. We then repeat this cycle for 3 more times. This technique can be modified for less seconds (i.e. 2-3.5-4)



and worked up to the 4-7-8 cycle. The more this technique is practiced the more effective it is in reducing stress levels.

Meditation is a versatile enough to be included in yoga, mindfulness and many other areas in our lives. One specific type of meditation, guided meditation is helpful in the grief process and promotes healing. There are several guided meditations that involve the use of mantras or other statements that help us reengage with life in a compassionate way. There are also cellphone applications that can be used to facilitate this process. Once we have identified which guided meditation is ideal for us we must find a quiet comfortable spot to begin the process. Placing one hand over our heart, we focus on our breathing and begin playing the guided meditation. Listening to the instruction as we go along. It's important to enter this process with compassion and kindness to ourselves and our grief. This type of meditation can help us be cultivate calm and find connection with those around us.

No matter which activity we chose to help us bring a more sense of calm in our lives, it's important we incorporate self-care in our grieving process. Not only can this help reduce unexpected symptoms of loss such anxiety, overwhelming thoughts and emotions, it can also help us feel more grounded and present in the moment. The techniques above are simple and are one of many to help improve our self-care. Exploring which self-care strategies are right for us is only the beginning of this process.

The Children's Bereavement Center "CBC" is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing FREE grief support groups for all ages (4+). **Lift From Loss®** is a division of CBC providing support for young adults and adults. For additional resources, visit our website at www.childbereavement.org. To register for our free virtual grief support groups, call us at (888) 988-5438 or e-mail support@childbereavement.org.



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