

Good Grief: Moving Forward from Recent Losses

Additional Questions from Webinar Session



Q&A responses provided by Amy Monzingo, MS, NCC, LMHP, LMHC, Best Care EAP Counselor

My mom has been in hospice since June 2020. She is in Wisconsin and I am in South Carolina. I am grieving daily. Hospice can be so difficult because it is often a long goodbye. I am sorry you are going through that and then to be so far away as well. One of the main concerns, I would think, would be to find ways to connect. Find ways to be present in what is going on with your mom even if you can't physically be there. Of course, much depends on your mom's level of ability – both physical and cognitive – but there are some things that can help you feel like you are helping her through this.

I would imagine there is a feeling of helplessness in not being able to see her and do things for her like you would if you were near. Some ideas that come to mind: Create a playlist or CD of favorite songs or music that you know she would enjoy. Have your own book club – send her a book to read or an audio book to listen to and then that gives you both something to talk about as you are reading the same book at the same time. Keep her stocked with favorite snacks.

Facetime or zoom as available with her and other family. Reminisce about the past – favorite memories, holidays, vacations, funny stories. Create a small photo album of family members in present time so she can look through that. Those are some things you can do for your mom, but they will also benefit you and help you to feel more like you are doing something to help her. Put your focus on what you can control. Talk about what you are going through with others. Maybe have a project just for yourself such as creating a photo book all about your mom or learning a hobby that has always been one of your mom's favorite things to do. I think it also helps to acknowledge that living in this limbo space of hospice and prolonged grief is hard.

Are there any quick ways to identify who is grieving around us and how we can help them get through grief? I don't know if there is a quick way to identify, but some things to look out for could be: brain fog or forgetfulness that isn't usually present, decreased attention span or production, tearfulness, withdrawing, unusual emotional reactions such as irritability or snapping at people, increased absences, isolation. Help them through grief by just being present. Acknowledge that you are aware they are grieving. Offer to complete specific tasks for them. Be patient. Offer space to talk about their loved one or the event that caused loss.

I've experienced three loved ones passing in the last 6 weeks. How do I separate grieving for each of them? Any recommendations for multiple losses at one time? That is a lot of loss in such a short amount of time. So sorry to hear that. Your grief is naturally going to be lumped together in many ways. And that is okay. It may be difficult to try to figure out if your sadness at one particular moment is related to one specific person. As you know, all of those emotions will overlap each other and that can be difficult to separate.

Try to be intentional in your grief. An example of this would be to – and I know this sounds strange but it can really be helpful – intentionally grieve for one person for a certain period of time. Schedule a 20-30 minute time period where you allow yourself to think completely about one person, to grieve that person and put your energy toward him/her. Be intentional about spending time in your grief with the various people. Maybe create separate projects for each person – a photo album, scrapbook, building something that reminds you of that person such as a small wooden item, painting or coloring a picture, taking photos of landscapes that have a connection to the person.

If you need further information on this program, email eap@bestcareeap.org. Or call 402-354-8000.