

Ten Top Tips



When you have experienced a loss

Loss takes many forms and can occur at any time. It may be that you have lost a loved one, such as a family member or pet. You may have even lost your job, found out you have a chronic disease or are unable to have children. Perhaps the children have just left home or you are having trouble coming to terms with growing old.

- 1. Understand and be aware** that you are not going crazy. Grief is a hotch potch of bewildering emotions. It is like being on an emotional roller coaster. Periods of seeming irrationality and unexpected anger do not mean that you are going crazy.
- 2. Take time out for yourself.** Take time to be alone when you need it. Take time when you need to seek the support of others. Take time to perform the important rituals of loss and bereavement. Take time to consider all the options. Take time to make decisions. Take time to treat yourself kindly and gently. Know that it takes time to heal and give yourself that time.
- 3. Friends and family** will feel utterly helpless in the face of your loss. They will not know what you need unless you tell them. Do not expect them to be able to read your mind. Forgive them for their clumsiness and awkwardness and don't mistake their words and actions for unkindness and insensitivity.
- 4. The loss of a loved one** can be as psychologically wounding as breaking a leg is physiologically wounding. Recovery is not something that will happen in days or even weeks. Despite what other people say to you, recovering from a loss is different for everyone. Listen to what your internal voice is telling you what you need. Don't listen to the external voices telling you what they think you should be feeling or doing. You are your own person on your own personal journey.
- 5. Keep a journal.** A journal offers a means of expressing feelings and can also provide evidence that you are making progress through the tunnel of grief although you may not yet be able to see the light at the other end.
- 6. Give yourself permission.** Give yourself permission to be messy emotionally and otherwise. Give yourself permission to ask for help when you need it and permit yourself to have good days as well as bad. And give yourself permission to say 'no' when you want to say no.
- 7. Treat yourself** as kindly as you would treat someone else struggling with your experience. Imagine what words you would say and things you would do for someone else in your situation and do these things for yourself. It may mean going for a walk, reading a book or magazine, going to the cinema or buying yourself some flowers. It may even mean taking a few days away by yourself.
- 8. Seek professional help** if you are feeling that you cannot cope. Many of us do not know how to deal with loss because it is still a bit of a taboo subject in Australia. There is no shame in asking for help and there is no shame in grieving. In fact, asking for help is a sensible thing to do when you are feeling overwhelmed.
- 9. Grieve in your way.** Everybody grieves in uniquely different ways. No one else can know what is best for you. There are no rules.
- 10. Hang in there.** Even though there will be times when you will find it almost impossible to believe, you will get through.