# Developed by University of Nevada, Las Vegas Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

# While CAPS would like to ensure this information is as thorough as possible we cannot guarantee these tips will work for everyone. If you do not find these strategies helpful during your time of grief or loss, please try to connect with a licensed mental health professional.

**Outlooks and Perspectives on Death and Loss:**

* There is no “correct” way to grieve the loss of someone we love or someone who is important to us.
* Many times the pain we feel related to a loss is a reflection of how important that person was to us. The more pain one feels, the more important that person probably was to them.
* Be kind and patient with yourself as you work through thoughts and feelings related to the loss.
* Give yourself permission to experience all of the thoughts and feelings that come with the loss.
* Needing outside help of assistance, from friends, family, or mental health professionals, is not a sign of weakness.
* Acceptance of a loss does not mean being happy about the loss. It simply means acknowledging the reality of the situation.

**Common Reactions to Death or Loss:**

* Feelings
  + *Tears and Crying*: Feeling sad is a completely normal part of the grieving process and is not a bad thing. Try not to reject such sad feelings, and try to refrain from being hard on yourself if you experience them.
  + *Guilt*: May lament missed opportunities or a lost future during grief. May also experience feelings of guilt during times of happiness. Some people will feel as if they “should” feel sad for a very long time after a loss. Give yourself permission to do enjoyable things and try to not beat yourself up when you find ways to enjoy your life in spite of a recent loss
  + *Anger*: Anger can be a very common and normative reaction to loss.
  + *Loneliness*: Many people will feel like nobody can understand what they are going through.
  + *Denial and Shock* – May initially refuse to accept the reality of the situation.
* Coping with loss is not linear. There will be “ups” and “downs” along the way.
* There is no “correct” way to grieve. Some people cry, some pray, some are in complete shock, some meditate, some adopt a new pet, some find inspiration or motivation. There is no “right” way to grieve.
* Symptoms of grief may be physical (e.g., fatigue, low energy, etc.), cognitive (e.g., helpless, frustrated, irritable, etc.), or emotional (sad, worried, hopeless about future, etc.). You may experience symptoms from one or all of these areas.

**Strategies & Self-Care Tips for Dealing with Death:**

* Dedicate 15-20 minutes per day for reflection and solitude. This can help one feel less overwhelmed and prevent the “buildup” up negative thoughts and feelings.
* Take it one day at a time.
* Start and maintain a daily routine that includes a wake-up time, time for meals, and a bed time. Structure is a good thing in this kind of situation.
* Do nice and special things for yourself.
* Reach out to friends and family to ensure you have social support during this process. Utilize this social support network to talk about your feelings and what aspects of the loss have been most difficult. You can socialize to talk about the loss or to simply “escape,” have fun, and have a respite from the stress.
* Start a journal or diary and write about your thoughts and feelings surrounding the loss. This kind of diary can also be utilized to write about fond memories you had with the person you have lost.
* Write a letter to “say goodbye” to the person you have lost.
* Plant a tree or start some kind of meaningful memorial for the person you have lost.
* Join a bereavement support group (you can find these through a local hospital, NAMI, or other community resources).
* Read books on grief or loss.
* Eat nutritious foods. “Junk” foods can sometimes make us feel bad physically.
* Exercise in a way you find enjoyable (in order to release endorphins, which combat depressive feelings).
* Avoid stimulants like caffeine, especially in the afternoon/evening, which might undermine your ability to sleep.
* Find ways to relax (e.g., listen to soothing music, long baths, lighting candles, etc.).
* Avoid self-medicating with substances like marijuana and alcohol.
* Make things that you can control work for you. Let go of things you cannot control
* Try to avoid making big life decisions during the first few months (e.g., selling your house and moving away), if not the first year, after a tragic loss.
* Healing happens at your own speed and pace. Embrace the process.
* Expect “relapses.” Remember, grief is not linear.
* Thoughts of suicide or that you would be better off dead may imply that you need additional help. Please reach out to an emergency suicide hotline or call “9-1-1” if you are having thoughts that you want to harm or kill yourself.

**Ways to Support Someone Who is Grieving:**

* Be supportive and do not try to “correct” their feelings.
* Talk openly and honestly with the person about what happened.
* Pay attention to non-verbal signals you are giving. Make sure you are inviting an open discussion.
* Be an active listener and focus on making your loved one feel heard.
* Encourage them to seek professional help if their symptoms seem extreme or concerning (e.g., suicidal ideations, consistent substance abuse, etc.)

**Community Grief Resources:**

*\*\*Please note that UNLV CAPS does not endorse or have a personal or professional relationship with these resources. These resources are provided as a courtesy for those in need. \*\**

* Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/groups/grief/nv/las-vegas>
* Las Vegas Grief & Loss Counseling Center: 702-580-4912 or <https://www.griefcounselinglv.com/>
* Adams Place: 702-202-3891 or <https://adamsplacelv.org/>
* Center for Disease Control (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/stress-coping/grief-loss.html>
* Nathan Adelson Hospice: 702-733-0320 or <https://www.nah.org/what-we-do/center-for-compassionate-care/bereavement-services>
* National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI): 702-890-9729 or <https://www.namisouthernnevada.org/>
* Grief Share: 800-395-5755 or <https://www.griefshare.org/countries/us/states/nv/cities/las_vegas>