How to Cope with Grief After Sudden Death

While each person grieves differently after such an unexpected and devastating experience, below you will find common reactions to sudden death.

**Shock** Disbelief and emotional numbness might set in. You might think that a person’s death couldn’t possibly be real and it was just a mistake.

**Helplessness** Lack of knowing what to do to be effective during this painful time.

**Regret** Feeling as though you had missed opportunities to say or do things.

**Guilt and Blame** You may replay “what if” and “if only” scenarios blaming yourself or others.

**Anger** At the situation or with the person for no longer being present.

**Sadness** Frequent crying, despair, hopelessness, loneliness. You can also experience other emotions, including apathy or numbness. All feelings (or lack of them) are valid.

**Physical Symptoms** Difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, low energy, headaches, difficulties with focus/concentration.

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**TIPS FOR COPING**

**BE KIND TO YOURSELF.** Avoid extra responsibilities. Set small goals. Expect and accept some reduction in your efficiency, consistency, and energy.

**GRIEVING IN YOUR OWN WAY.** Do what’s right for you, not necessarily someone else. There is no single “right” way to grieve. There is no shortcut through grief. There is no timetable for grief. Don’t rush yourself. Healing takes time.

**REACH OUT TO SOMEONE** who will listen to your story or with whom you can share your emotions. This may be a friend, faculty, staff, relative, spiritual leader. Realize also that some people choose to work through their grief alone and find solitude to be healing.

**PARTICIPATE IN RITUALS** Spiritual, cultural or personal rituals can be helpful (e.g., connecting with a church community, lighting a candle, journaling).

**STAY IN ROUTINES** of your life as much as possible. Avoid making sudden or major decisions.

**REMEMBER THE BASICS** It is helpful to maintain good nutrition and healthy sleep habits. Exercise regularly. Avoid excessive use of substances.

**TALK TO A PROFESSIONAL** Getting support from a professional can provide relief.

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CAPS IS HERE FOR YOU. Call us 24h at (847) 491-2151 or walk in M-F 8:30am-5pm