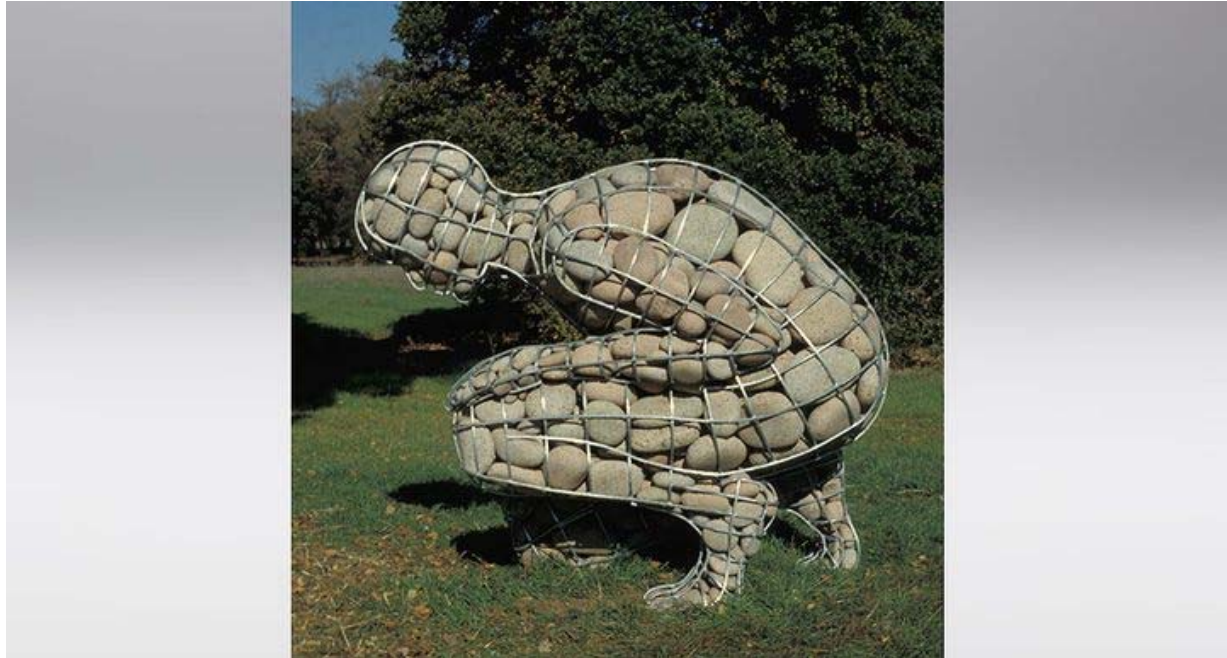


## 5 TIPS ON LEARNING TO CARRY YOUR GRIEF

Grief demands that our emotions and heartache be adequately attended to.

*You don't think you'll live past it and you don't really. The person you were is gone, but the half of you that is still alive wakes up one day and takes over again.* – Barbara Kingsolver



Yesterday I saw someone who looked like my late husband, who died eleven years ago. I immediately experienced the deep and intense heartache of missing him, and wishing that he was still here, wondering what life would be like had he not died. The same thing happens when something, or someone, reminds me of my son who died nine years ago. No matter how much time has passed, the anguish is still there. I have come to accept that this sorrow will always be a part of my life. It has taken me years to learn how to carry the pain and find a way to live life again.

Whether the loss of your loved one is recent, or many years ago, the pain of learning to live without them can be crippling and it can seem impossible to find a way forward. It is confusing and painful to watch others continue unaffected in their daily lives when your life is shattered. How do you begin to put the pieces of your life back together so that you can find a way to function again? How do you learn to live with the pain? Is it possible to ever feel joy again?

# **How Do I Carry This Pain?**

## **1. Acknowledge that your life will be different**

Death leaves a void in your life that is permanent. Your loved one is no longer here. Nothing you do can change this fact. No matter how much you long for life to be the way it was when your loved one was here, there is no turning back the hands of time. You are stuck here in the present moment without them. This is the brutal and undeniable truth that death and grief bring into your life. Acknowledging that your life will never be the same will help you begin to see a way to put the pieces that are remaining of your life back together again.

## **2. Let yourself feel all of your emotions**

You should be prepared that you will experience a vast array of emotions: anger, fear, irritability, resentment, and hopelessness, being just a few. The actual scope of emotions you may experience is almost endless. If these emotions are not acknowledged and eventually worked through, they will pull you down into the quicksand of grief, each one like a weight attached to your ankle.

Grief demands that our emotions and heartache be adequately attended to, honored, and healed before we are allowed to move forward.

## **3. Strengthen your grief muscles**

Just as we can strengthen our physical muscles, we can work on a regular basis on strengthening our grief muscles. Most of the time we are not even aware we are developing these muscles. Every day that you spend without your loved one, conditions you to learn how to eventually be able to move forward while carrying your grief. No matter how much time passes you will always have moments where the grief is too heavy again and overwhelms your grief muscles. But if you keep plodding ahead through the pain, the muscles will recover enough to allow you to move out of the deep anguish you are feeling. One step at a time. Do not stop.

## **4. As time goes on do you best to limit the amount of time you spend during the day focused on your grief**

This is a really hard one. It is hard to believe that we have any control over the amount of time we spend mired in our grief. I can look back now and see that I lost years of my life because I didn't believe that I had any control over my thoughts and feelings. Basically, I allowed my thoughts and feelings to control me.

In the novel, [The Girl from the Train](#), by Irma Joubert, I read an idea that had great appeal to me. The book described the use of a mourning blanket after a loved one's death. You set aside a specific amount of time during the day and wrap yourself up in the blanket, imagining that your lost loved one is there with you and that you are

grieving the loss together. After the blanket is put away, the griever gets on with the business of daily living.

Using an item like a mourning blanket is a physical reminder that you have control over the amount of time you allow yourself to actively grieve throughout the day. It doesn't mean that you forget or pretend that your pain isn't real. It means that you also recognize that you must learn how to live and function with the pain.

## **5. Hang onto the love you shared**

Many times our default memories about our lost loved one are the painful ones surrounding the loss. You can change that default picture by making a concerted effort to remember the love you shared. And then, remember that this love can never be lost. This love will always be yours.

Let love help you learn to carry your pain. Healing grief and learning to live without your loved one is the hardest thing you will ever do, but love and loss can learn to walk side by side. By honoring your pain and the love you shared, you can find a way to live again.

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[https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-weight-of-grief-learning-to-carry-your-pain\\_b\\_5921ae3ee4b0b28a33f62d28](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-weight-of-grief-learning-to-carry-your-pain_b_5921ae3ee4b0b28a33f62d28)

