

Approaching the Anniversary

Anniversary of Death

Our thoughts are with you as you approach the first year of the death of your loved one. Anniversaries, special family occasions and birthdays may be difficult after loss because they can bring back painful memories and cause a temporary upsurge of grief. Grief has its own timetable and each person needs to deal with grief in his/her own way.

It is normal for you to feel a deeper sense of loss as you approach the anniversary of death. Grief can make you feel lonely and isolated. Allowing your reactions without judgment, whatever they might be, is an opportunity for healing. Remember that the natural aftershocks of grief should pass more quickly each time you give yourself permission to experience them.

Often the anticipation of this milestone is worse than the date itself. Identifying those associated feelings as part of the anniversary reaction helps to calm them down. Allow yourself time to be sad and feel a sense of loss and in turn balance your pain by giving thanks for the life of the person who has died.

It takes conscious effort to reach out to family and friends and to take care of yourself. Keep in mind that eating healthy foods, exercising, writing down your thoughts and feelings, and talking to friends – in short, taking action that is nurturing of life – can go a long way in helping you through grief.

Healing Rituals

Rituals can offer a meaningful way to ease emotions and help healing. They may be shared with others or done privately. It is important to do what feels comfortable to you. Think of ways that fit best with your lifestyle, mood and loved one. Some suggestions are mentioned below.

- Read a poem or story, or listen to a favorite song which makes you feel closer to the person who has died.
- Light a candle on a certain day and time.
- Write a letter and store in a special place.

- Plant his or her favorite flower, or buy your own to enjoy.
- Have a meal at a favorite restaurant frequented by you and your loved one.
- Plant his or her favorite flower, or buy your own to enjoy.
- Make a contribution to an organization that was important to your loved one.
- Create a memory book filled with postcards, notes, pictures, sayings, and other memorabilia from your life together.

After the First Year

No matter how long it's been since your loss, your heart will always carry grief. Most grieving people agree that it takes at least two years to establish new routines, create a different lifestyle and realize a new identity. Even if you have been doing well by the end of the first year, you may be surprised about how intensely the one-year anniversary of your loved one's death affects you.

You may want to attend one of our support groups and/or seek further evaluation from your physician if you continue to experience the following symptoms:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Loss of appetite
- Withdrawal from social activities, friends and family
- Loss of enjoyment in life
- Feeling pessimistic, hopeless and irritable

Contact Us

The employees at Spectrum Health Hospice hope that this information has been helpful as you move through the first year of loss. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at any time.

Spectrum Health Hospice
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Spectrumhealth.org/hospice

