

The Next Step

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How to Have Fun While Grieving

Patricia Morris, Bereavement Coordinator (Stuart, VA)

Many people who are grieving feel guilty for smiling, laughing and having a good time. It is common to feel that you are being disloyal to your loved one when having fun. However, the old saying "Laughter is the best medicine" can be applied to grief. Yes, grief can be hard work, and it *is* a time to remember your loved one. But, laughter can also be part of the healing process.

Some of what is shared in this article may be too soon for you to think about, at this time. If your grief is new, re-

read this article in a few months. We all grieve differently. You alone know what you are ready to do.

Being engaged in a fun activity can bring many healthy benefits. For instance, there are physical benefits, depending on the level of physical activity.

There are emotional and spiritual benefits when involved in a meaningful activity, whether by yourself or with other people. Even laughter, itself, is a great exercise, especially for your diaphragm! Unfortunately, participation in leisurely



activities often takes a back seat to our grief.

There are many things that influence our leisure. Even being aware of leisure is new for some people, particularly those who worked as children and then

as adults trying to raise children. Of course, our skills and preferences also influence how we enjoy our time. What one person finds enjoyable, another person may not find fun at all – and that is just fine! After all, our leisurely time is *our* personal time. Some people prefer individual activities, while others like to be part of a crowd. Some leisurely activities can be done at home, while others need to be done outside. With that said, one of the biggest

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Alzheimer's Disease & the Grieving Caregiver

Rhonda Smith, Social Worker (Hillsville, VA)

It can be quite difficult to cope with the feelings related to losing a loved one with dementia. When a person with dementia dies, their family and caregivers are sometimes left with a range of emotions. For instance, it is normal to experience a sense of loss *before* the death, when caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease. Therefore, sorting out feelings of grief *after* the loved one's death can become complicated. One may find themselves grieving not only about the loss, but also the relationship that was lost during the advancement of their loved one's disease.

I remember how, during an

Alzheimer's support group in which I help, a woman recalled the emotions she felt as her husband's disease progressed. She said the hardest part was *not* providing care, but losing the husband she used to know and learning the person he had become.

Alzheimer's can slowly change the person you spent your life knowing and loving.

During the course of their illness, you may have been required to make enormous sacrifices for someone who did not always remember your name. Your relationship with the individual significantly changed as the stages of their illness progressed. You

continued to care for them and

love them, though at times it was as if you were caring for a stranger.

Often people find they have grieved so much while caring for their loved one that they do not initially experience strong feelings when the family member or friend passes away. They had already experienced different levels of loss, during their loved one's decline. They had gone through the grieving process several times during the illness. Strong feelings may arrive at a later time and can feel unexpected. One may find themselves later feeling what they didn't feel immediately after their loved one's passing.

It can take time to come to terms with a loved one's death. Those caregivers who have cared for their loved one full-time may end up feeling a void when that time ends. It is good to remember it takes time to adjust. Accepting help is important, and reaching out to a friend or support group is okay.

People sometimes have the inclination to believe that grief should be rushed. Perhaps A.A. Milne said it best: "Rivers know this: There is no hurry. We shall get there someday." Everyone grieves differently and for different lengths of time. There is no rush, and with the help of others, you will get there.

A Lifetime Wish

Author Unknown

<p>If we could have a lifetime wish, A dream that would come true, We'd pray to God with all our hearts For yesterday and you. A thousand words can't bring you back. We know because we've tried. Neither will a thousand tears – We know because we've cried.</p>	<p>You left behind our broken hearts, And happy memories too. But we never wanted memories, We only wanted you. It broke our hearts to lose you. But you don't go alone. For part of our hearts went with you, The day God called you home.</p>
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GriefShare.org's mailing list provides daily emails to help one through the grieving process.

Ask the Staff: “Energy Deficiency, Memory Loss — Common Symptoms of Grief”

Sandra Yates, Bereavement Coordinator (Mount Airy, NC)

Q: “I don’t have the energy to clean my house, or do even the most basic things. I’m also having trouble remembering items on my to-do list. Why am I so exhausted? Why do I feel so out of control?”

A: What affects the mind of a person also affects other distinct parts of that person. Our body responds to what our mind tells it. So, it is understandable as to why someone experiencing grief would be tired and devoid of concentration.

Grief is the *inward* manifestation of the loss, and mourning is the *outward* expression of that loss. Thus, while we are experiencing changes in our inward world emotionally, there are also adjustments in the outer world practically. One example of this is all of the paperwork that has to be filed with the loss of a loved one or friend. Most financial institutions strongly suggest that changes be made on financial documents within 2 to 3 weeks – basically 10 days – after the death certificate has been obtained. So, the normal grief

related to the loved one’s death, the funeral service with family arriving from out of town, and the paperwork that has to be filed with the financial institutions and the clerk of court – all of this can and *will* zap strength and vigor from even the sturdiest individuals. Therefore, it is no wonder that an individual who has experienced a recent loss would be exhausted.

That is why we bereavement coordinators strongly suggest that a person who has experienced a loss care for themselves by eating healthy meals and by securing 8 to 9 hours of sleep each night, if possible. With that said, it is normal during the grieving process to experience an interruption in sleep and eating habits, especially if one was the primary caregiver for the now-deceased patient. Their sleeping patterns were already disturbed while taking care of their loved one, due to the up-and-down movements during the evening hours; this would also contribute to the sheer exhaustion during the first few weeks of grief. However, if the sleep disturbance continues 2 to 3

months, it is strongly suggested that the grieving person seek professional assistance from their primary care physician.

As stated earlier, grief also affects the mind of the person. Sometimes, people tend to feel “out of control” during the grieving process, with their emotions being heightened. Reflecting on the loved one who is now gone – from their life to the lives they touched – individuals lose concentration on other aspects of life. However, this can have a positive effect if one allows, helping us realign certain priorities.

As for the everyday, oft-forgotten tasks, one may wish to keep a pad of paper and a pen nearby at all times, to jot down and remember necessary items, such as appointments.

Have a question for Mountain Valley Hospice? Contact us at mtnvalleyhospice.org/forms/contact, and we may feature it in an upcoming issue.

The Next Step newsletter and all other bereavement services are offered at no cost to the community, courtesy of Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care. If one would like to make a donation, please contact Sheila Jones at 336-789-2922, or visit mtnvalleyhospice.org/forms/donate.



Bereavement Staff and Support Groups

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 Josh Armstrong, BS
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 Lisa VanHorn, BS

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276-728-1030
 Bruce Thomas, M. Ed

Stuart, VA
276-694-4416
 Patricia Morris, BS, TRS

Mount Airy
 2nd Tuesday of every month
 9:00 a.m. Good Mourning with Fonda
 Prime Sirloin

4th Tuesday of every month
 11:30 a.m. Fonda's Lunch Bunch
 Golden Corral

Elkin
 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month
 10:00 a.m. "Living with Grief"
 Matty's Restaurant

1st Monday of every month
 7:00 p.m. "Transitioning to the New"
 Fairfield Inn

4th Monday of every month
 7:00 p.m. Prime Time with Lisa
 (Loss of spouse in one's 30s, 40s, and 50s)
 Fairfield Inn

Stuart
 3rd Wednesday of every month
 1:30 p.m. Support with Patricia
 Stuart United Methodist Church

Wilkes County
 1st and 3rd Monday of every month
 2:00 p.m. Listening with Lisa
 Rose Glen Village • Wilkesboro

Yadkin County
 1st Thursday of every month
 11:30 a.m. Sharing with Sarah
 Ace's Restaurant • Yadkinville

Hillsville
 3rd Thursday of every month
 11:30 a.m. Moments with Bruce
 Hillsville Office

Fun While Grieving cont.

influences of how we determine what to do during our leisurely time is our finances. There are many fun things you can do that have little-to-no cost.

Sometimes it takes a while to figure out what you like to do. For some people, it is hard to figure out what is enjoyable simply because they are used to tending to others' needs and wants. Some people have a hard time making their own needs and wants a priority, which is important as you learn to cope with your loss. Remember, it is okay to

have fun!

There are some things to consider, when deciding what to do for leisure. Do you want to be an active participant, or a spectator? Do you enjoy indoor, or outdoor, activities? Do you prefer individual, small group, or large group activities? Physical level of participation and what your health will allow should also be considered. Talk to your doctor before beginning any new physical activity. Can you do activities with fine motor skills? Do you want to participate in activities

that make you think? What kind of equipment is needed? Lastly, how much are you able to spend on your leisurely pursuits?

Making leisure an important part of your life will help increase your quality of life and also facilitate healing. Make yourself a priority and become engaged in an activity that you enjoy. Getting involved in fun activities will not make your grief go away, but it *will* help you remember

that finding pleasure in life is a healthy part of the grieving process.



For more reading material, visit the Grief Resources section of The Mount Airy Public Library.

Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care Bereavement Services

Following a patient's death, Mountain Valley provides specialized grief support services to help loved ones cope with their loss. These services are provided as part of hospice care for routinely 13 months, at no cost to the recipient, and include:

- Grief counseling and education
- Face-to-face/phone sessions
- Monthly support groups
- Monthly newsletter

For questions and comments, contact Mountain Valley Hospice at 336-789-2922 or 888-789-2922, or mtnvalleyhospice.org.

*Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity, the price you pay for love.
The only cure for grief is to grieve.*

— **Dr. Earl Grollman**
Author and Grief Specialist

Return Service Requested

