

The Grieving Person's Bill of Rights



1 – You have the right to experience your own grief. No one else will grieve in exactly the same way you do. So when you turn to others for help, don't allow them to tell you what you should or should not be feeling.

2 – You have the right to talk about your grief. Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk as much as you want, as often as you want, about your grief.

3 – You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions. Confusion, disorientation, fear, guilt and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your journey. Find listeners who will accept your feelings unconditionally.

4 – You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits. Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you feeling fatigued. Respect what your mind and body are telling you.

5 – You have the right to experience grief “attacks”. Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This can be frightening, but it's normal and natural.

6 – You have the right to make use of meaningful rituals. Funeral or memorial rituals do more than acknowledge the death of a loved one. They help provide you with the support of caring people. More importantly, such rituals provide a way for you to mourn.

7 – You have the right to embrace your spirituality. If faith is a part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you feel angry at God, find someone to talk with who won't be critical of your feelings.

8 – You have the right to search for meaning. You may find yourself asking “Why did he or she die? Why this way? Why now?”. Some of your questions may have answers, but some may not. And watch out for clichéd responses that some people may give you.

9 – You have the right to treasure your memories. Memories are one of the best legacies that exists after the death of a loved one. You will always cherish those memories. Instead of ignoring them, find others with whom you can share them.

10 – You have the right to move toward your grief and heal. Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself and avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you. Neither you nor those around you must forget that the death of someone changes your life forever.