

PATHWAYS CENTER

for GRIEF & LOSS

“EXTREME” SELF-CARE ON YOUR GRIEF JOURNEY

The stress associated with grieving affects all aspects of your being: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. In just a short period of time, you can use up your energy resources and feel overwhelmed and exhausted from the stress of your grief. During this time, it is important to remember to practice extreme self-care in order to nurture you on your grief journey. The following suggestions are ways to care for yourself and lessen your “grief stress.” Make time to do one or two of below on a daily basis:

- Break a task into smaller, more manageable pieces. Instead of expecting yourself to finish an entire project in one sitting, break it down and develop smaller goals.
- Think about the people and places that bring you the most joy.
- Prioritize your life, responsibilities and time. Practice saying “no” to items that are lower on your priority list.
- Identify people in your life who are positive supports and carve out time to talk or spend time with them.
- Honor your feelings; do not judge yourself for feeling angry, sad or frustrated. Whenever you are able, honestly share these feelings with other people.
- Listen to your favorite music but be mindful that some songs can be grief triggers.
- Water can be healing. Take a long, hot shower or bath.
- Start a new hobby or reconnect with an old hobby you previously enjoyed doing.
- Create a “to do” list. This list may help you spend less time dwelling on the stressors and responsibilities in your life. Keep this list beside your bed and write things down as you think of them. This may help you fall asleep faster.
- Allow yourself to have some comfort food. Eat a bowl of ice-cream or have a piece of chocolate.
- When getting through a day or evening feels overwhelming, think about it in smaller segments of time. For example, tell yourself you only have to make it through lunchtime. After lunch, think through your plans for the afternoon or evening.
- Create a list of short term goals. What would you like to accomplish in the next two to three months? These goals may be ways to remember your loved one and can help you discover a sense of purpose.
- Plan a weekend trip or attend a local event as a way to “take a break” from your grief.
- Create a safe and comfortable place for yourself in your home. Fill it with all of your favorite things, perhaps a cozy blanket, pillow, music. Get in your comfy clothes and spend some time there.

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- Explore ways to express your anger – maybe scream into or punch a pillow!
- Practice a random act of kindness. Think of something nice you can do for someone else and make plans to do it.
- Practice deep breathing exercises, make an appointment for a massage, try a meditation exercise or prayer.
- Do something creative. Considering taking a painting class or make a scrapbook.
- Spend time in nature. Take a walk in a local park or around your neighborhood. Relish the sights, sounds and smells of the great outdoors.
- Start a gratitude journal and write down aspects of your life for which you are grateful.
- Tell someone you love them.
- Spend time with a pet.
- Make a list of what you feel guilty about. Consider where you can make amends and acknowledge which ones you are powerless to change.
- Surprise someone by sending them a card, buying them flowers or finding a way to tell them you care about them.
- Ask a treasured friend or family member to list the strengths they see in you. Read and reflect on the list.
- Be kind, compassionate and gentle with yourself. Allow yourself to make mistakes, feel angry, sad, guilty and have bad days.
- Spend some time thinking about a time when you felt extremely loved and happy. Relish in the details of that moment in time.
- If you are struggling with a difficult person in your life, try the following suggestion. Concentrate at length, perhaps even half a day, on identifying ways he or she is actually good and admirable. Consider sharing your thoughts with this person.
- Look through magazines to find pictures of beautiful scenery or settings which are comforting to you. Spend some time imagining how you would feel if you were there at this moment.

Although you can not influence or change what has happened to you, there is much you can do to affect how you cope with your loss. By making the effort to follow through on some of these suggestions, you will actively progress along your grief journey. As you intentionally practice good self-care, you will in time discover new ways to embrace life.