

The Children's Room

Center for Grieving Children and Teenagers, Inc.

SOME COMMON MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT GRIEF

MYTH: The pain of loss will go away faster if you ignore it.

Fact: Trying to ignore your pain will only make it worse in the long run. Finding safe and comfortable settings for the expression of your feelings -- with trusted friends or family, in a support group, with a counselor, through artistic expression -- is an important part of taking care of yourself at this trying time. And sometimes you will need to do or think about other things -- there's nothing wrong with this!

MYTH: It's important to "be strong" in the face of loss.

Fact: Feeling sad, frightened, angry or lonely are some normal reactions to loss. Crying or voicing these feelings doesn't mean you're weak -- it just means that you're sad, frightened, angry or lonely. In fact, being honest about what you're feeling often requires great strength! Some of the people you typically rely on for support may not know how to respond to these parts of your experience, but that doesn't mean there's something wrong with you. Being honest about how you feel will help you and may help make it okay for someone else to do the same.

MYTH: If you don't cry, it means you aren't feeling sad enough about your loss.

Fact: Crying is a normal response to loss, but it's not the only one. There is no single right way to feel, and no single right way to express what you're feeling. Depending on the circumstances of the death and your relationship with the deceased, you may feel many different feelings - sadness, fear, anger, relief, regret - and your feelings will evolve over time. Let yourself feel what you feel, and turn to those supports who can accept you as you are.

MYTH: Grief should last about a year.

Fact: There's no roadmap or schedule for grief -- it's different in for each person, and for each loss. The loss will be part of your life from now on. Your feelings about it will change over time, but this will not be a linear and orderly experience. Be patient with yourself, and be wary of messages, however well intentioned, that there's a "right way" to grieve.

MYTH: Moving on with your life means you're forgetting the one you lost.

Fact: Contrary to the widespread notion that "getting over" loss depends on "letting go" of the person who died, many people find that successfully going on with their lives includes finding a new way to feel connected to the person who died. This means

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different things to different people, but the point is that moving ahead in your life isn't a betrayal of the person who died, and staying emotionally connected to the person who died doesn't mean you're not "moving on" correctly.

MYTH: Friends can help by not bringing up the subject.

Fact: Friends can help a griever by being with the griever where he or she is. People who are grieving often struggle to find people willing to talk about it, so asking open-ended questions and sharing your own memories of the person who died can communicate that you're a safe person to talk to about this huge life experience.

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