

## Finding hope beyond grief

You have experienced a loss. You may have lost a relative or a friend. Or perhaps you have been a victim of rape, assault or other violence. Maybe you have moved or changed jobs. Any of these situations can evoke feelings of loss of which there are many types. A loss of friendship, loss of dignity, loss of independence, or loss of trust are a few examples.

### Understanding is part of healing

Those who experience any of the above need to work toward understanding their loss as a part of the healing process. The time it takes for an emotional wound to heal varies from person to person. The healing process is best done openly and honestly. The following suggestions may help ease recovery for adults and teens.

- **Let friends and family help** Take advantage of their offers to help you. It makes them feel good; they are doing something for you.
  - **Share your feelings.** If you are feeling overwhelmed, talk it over with a trained counselor or another bereaved person. Objectivity is often helpful.
  - **Do not use alcohol and drugs.** The work of mourning does not proceed while you are numb. It resumes when sedation wears off.
  - **Work on acknowledging reality.** Tell yourself, "It happened. I have to deal with it."
  - **Anger is natural.** Try to keep it in focus.
  - **Try to replace "why" with "what?"** Stop looking for causes and begin to think about next steps. Ask, "What do I do now?" The answer may be "Nothing," and that's normal. One day at a time is all you can manage.
  - **Begin your what with small questions,** such as, "What should I wear?"
- **Pain is part of the process; accept it.** It will be bad, but pain is a by-product of the healing process – just as you feel pain when recovering from an illness or mending from a broken bone.
  - **Give yourself quiet time.** You will need time alone to let your mind run free; let it roam. Don't fight. This will help you heal.
  - **Adjust to your own timeframe.** You cannot rush the grieving process. Listen to your inner self and your feelings.
  - **Remind yourself of your worth.** Take good care of yourself emotionally, physically, socially and mentally.
  - **Be ready for relapses.** You will wake up one day feeling good and think it is over. It is not. Later that day you may feel a vivid reminder. Do not despair. Healing takes time. Be patient with yourself.

For the person experiencing loss, life has changed significantly, and many adjustments are required. It takes time and patience to deal with a significant loss. Following the suggestions above should take away some of the pain and stress associated with these types of experiences.

### For more help

If you need more help, talk to a friend, relative or member of the clergy. Or make an appointment with a counselor at (810) 257-3740. For emergencies, call Crisis Services, at (810) 257-3740 or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where a counselor is available 24 hours a day. © [www.genhs.org](http://www.genhs.org).