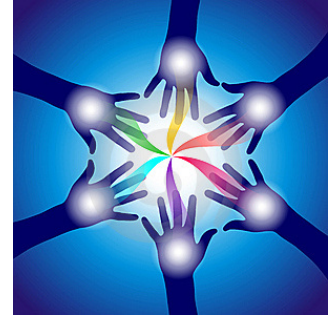


## TWELVE FREEDOMS OF HEALING IN GRIEF



**1. You have the freedom to realize that your grief is unique.**

- No one grieves exactly as you do.
- Don't compare your experience with that of other people.
- Don't make assumptions about how long your grief will last.
- Take a "day at a time" approach that lets you grieve at your own pace.

**2. You have the freedom to talk about your grief.**

- Ignoring your grief won't make it go away; talking about it often makes you feel better.
- Avoid persons who are critical of you.
- Find people who will walk with you on your journey.
- You have the right to express your grief. No one has the right to take it away.

**3. You have the freedom to expect to feel a multitude of emotions.**

- Experiencing loss affects your head, your heart, and your spirit.
- You may experience confusion, disorganization, fear, guilt, or other explosive emotions; this is normal. Allow yourself to learn from these emotions. Find someone who understands these feelings and who will allow you to talk about them.

**4. You have the freedom to allow for numbness.**

- Feeling numb is part of the early grief experience.
- This feeling is necessary because it helps to create insulation from the reality of the death until you are more able to tolerate what you do not want to believe.
- It gives your emotions time to catch up with what your mind has told you.

**5. You have the freedom to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.**

- Your feelings of loss and sadness will leave you fatigued.
- Your ability to think clearly and make decisions will be reduced.
- Nurture yourself.
- Caring for yourself doesn't mean feeling sorry for yourself; it means you are using survival skills.

**6. You have the freedom to experience grief attacks or memory embraces.**

- Sometimes out of nowhere, you will experience attacks of grief. This can be frightening, overwhelming, or even embarrassing.
- These attacks of "memory embraces" are normal.
- Find someone who understands and talk it out with them.



**7. You have the freedom to develop a support system.**

- The most loving action you can take at this time is to find a support system of caring people who will understand your needs, encourage you to be yourself, and acknowledge your feelings.

**8. You have the freedom to make use of ritual.**

- Rituals are specifically-designed actions that have deep meaning and significance to the person doing them.
- Rituals may be as simple as lighting a candle or thinking a special thought.
- Designing and performing a ritual helps you express your grief outside of yourself and helps you experience a transformation of your relationship to your loved one.

**9. You have the freedom to embrace your spirituality.**

- If faith is a part of your belief, express it.
- If you are angry at God because of what has happened, express it.
- Find people who won't be critical of your expressions of anger and abandonment, but who will understand and support these expressions of your spirituality.

**10. You have the freedom to allow a search for meaning.**

- You may ask "why?"
- This search for meaning is normal.
- The healing comes not in finding answers but in actual posing of the questions.
- Find someone who will listen supportively while you search for meaning.

**11. You have the freedom to treasure your memories.**

- Memories are one of the best legacies given to us after someone we love dies.
- We need to treasure them and share them.
- Whether they make us laugh or cry, memories are a lasting part of the relationship we had with that very special person.

**12. You have the freedom to move toward your grief and heal.**

- The capacity to love requires the necessity to grieve.
- You cannot heal unless you openly express your grief.
- Reconciling to your grief won't happen quickly. Grief is a process – not an event.
- Be patient and tolerant with yourself.
- When someone we love dies, we are changed forever. Not that we will never be happy again; it's just that we are not exactly the same as we were before.

Alan Wolfelt. *Understanding Grief*. Accelerated Development, Inc., Pub. Muncie, Indiana. 1992. Pg. 129-130. Reproduced with permission.

