Grieving the Loss of a Spouse

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Next Steps:

You need time to grieve. One moment you’re married; the next, you’re single and facing one of the most painful challenges of your life. Whether the death of your spouse was sudden or the result of a long illness, nothing can truly prepare you for such a loss. Grieving is hard work and it can take longer than you might anticipate. Your grief journey will be unique to you and your relationship with your spouse; however, there are practical tools and support to help you along your way.

1. Know that you are not alone. Cling to God and be honest with Him about your feelings. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those who are crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18
2. Be gentle with yourself, and attend to your basic needs for sleep, food and exercise. Adequate amounts of all three will give you the fuel you need to begin healing. The death of a spouse takes a toll on your well-being, creating both an emotional and physical shock to the body.
3. Understand that everyone grieves differently. Take life one moment, one day at a time, and grieve at your own pace.
4. Accept help from other outside sources, including family members and friends. Consider joining a grief support group, as fellow widows and widowers often are best equipped to fully understand what you are going through. (See information about GriefShare at Tallowood)
5. Give yourself permission if necessary, to find a professional with grief and loss counseling experience.
6. As you are able, recognize and strive to accept your new identity as a single person. Develop a new sense of yourself. Take on healthy ways of being in the world without your spouse. Find new people, objects or pursuits in which to put the emotional investment and service that you once had placed in your relationship with your spouse.

Tips & Warnings

- Focus on today. If the day is too long, focus on the next hour.
- Keep memories of your spouse alive. If you have children, actively include them in conversations about loss.
- Set safe boundaries and priorities for yourself.
- Try to wait for at least a year before making major decisions such as selling your home, relocating or making large purchases.
- Accept comfort and help from others.
- Seek wise counsel in decision making (financial, legal, relational etc…) Recognize your vulnerability.
- Do not feel rushed to clean out your spouse’s things. Take your time in this matter. When you are ready, actively participate in the process. It is an important step in healing for you to do this yourself.
- Try not to rush the healing process. As tempting as it is to want to move quickly through the painful feelings, you’ll want to experience the entire process to fully heal.
- Remember that it is good to heal. Your recovery does not mean you have forgotten, did not love or do not miss your spouse.
- Be cautious in any relationship with members of the opposite sex. After this kind of loss you can be at risk for unintentional emotional, mental or physical entanglement. Also, don’t hurry into dating and remarriage.
- If you are having thoughts of suicide or if your sadness becomes unbearable, contact your doctor or mental health specialist.

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Going Further – Resources

Recommended Books:
- **Getting to the Other Side of Grief: Overcoming the Loss of a Spouse**, by Susan J. Zonnebelt-Smeenge.
- **When Your Soul Aches: Hope and Help for Women Who Have Lost Their Husbands**, by Lois Mowday Rabey.
- **Coping with Life After Your Mate Dies**, by Donald C. Cusherbery.
- **Reflections of a Grieving Spouse: The Unexpected Journey from Loss to Renewed Hope**, by H. Norman Wright.
- **Let Me Grieve, But Not Forever: A Journey Out of the Darkness of Loss**, by Verdell Davis
- **A Grace Disguised**, by Jerry Sittser, how the soul grows through loss.
- **Letter to a Grieving Heart**, by Billy Sprague

Sign up for a year of daily devotionals through your journey of grief at: [http://www.griefshare.org/](http://www.griefshare.org/)

*or if you don’t receive email the following book is a compilation of the year of devotionals
- **Through a Season of Grief: Devotions for Your Journey from Mourning to Joy**, by Dunn, Bill, Leonard, Kathy

Recommended Websites:
- [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org)