

HEALING YOUR GRIEVING HEART

For TEENS

(Information provided by Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas, Simple Tips for understanding and expressing your grief by Alan D. Wolfelt, PH.D.)

Because you are a teen and because you are unique, you're very special. This is an exciting stage of your life. The changes you're going through physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually can be exhilarating and also overwhelming. You are not a kid anymore. You are not an adult either. Others may expect you to act, think and feel like an adult, but much of your childhood, thankfully, is still alive inside you.

So when someone you love or know dies, it can be more difficult for you now than at any other age. It's hard to understand and cope with all the feelings that accompany grief along with the changes your body and mind are experiencing. In some ways these feelings are similar: Both can cause moods to swing unexpectedly. Both can make you feel out of control of your life.

I'm sorry you've lost someone who meant a lot to you. You may feel very sad or hurt right now. Perhaps you are angry or depressed. Maybe you feel lost or deserted. All these feelings are part of grieving and are OK to feel.

Let me explain the difference between grief and mourning. *Grief* is what you think and feel on the inside when someone you love dies. *Mourning* is the expression of those thoughts and feelings—letting them out somehow. You mourn when you talk to other people about your grief, write about it in a journal, cry, look at photos of the person who died, visit the cemetery, etc. You may be grieving like crazy inside but unless you let out those powerful, painful thoughts and feelings, unless you mourn, you won't truly heal.

Here are a few practical ideas to help you through this process:

1. Attend the funeral or memorial service—there is comfort in knowing that others share your loss, and the support of others can help you through your grief.
2. Understand the **6 Needs of Mourning**: Accept the death, let yourself feel the pain of the loss, remember the person who died, develop a new self-identity, search for meaning, let others help you, now and always.
3. Use the name of the person who died
4. Keep a journal
5. Keep a memento of the person who died
6. Let yourself feel numb or any other feeling you have
7. Let go of destructive myths about grief and mourning: society has sent harmful messages about grief such as; you need to be strong and carry on, tears are a sign of weakness, you need to get over your grief, death is something we don't talk about. These statements are

false and harmful. Your grief is your grief and it's normal and necessary. Allow it to be what it is.

8. Expect a rollercoaster of emotions
9. Laugh, cry and have fun with friends
10. Be nice to yourself and go with the flow of your emotions
11. Get enough sleep, eat healthy and drink lots of water
12. It's important for you to know that you or others are not to blame for someone else's decision to commit suicide
13. Release your anger in constructive ways
14. Let your parents, pets and family comfort you
15. Memorialize the person who died, plant a tree in his/her memory
16. Don't "techno-escape": it can be tempting to loose yourself in your computer, video games, the TV, etc. It's ok once in awhile, but don't let it replace your interaction with friends and loved ones.
17. Write a letter to the person that died
18. Remember the good times, make a memory box of your loved one
19. Don't be scared to have "grief bursts": extreme feelings that seem to come out of nowhere...
20. Identify your needs and ask for them
21. Turn to your faith, family
22. Don't numb the pain in unhealthy ways (i.e. Substance abuse, negative behaviors)
23. Give yourself time
24. Be good to yourself and remember that people are there that care and love you...don't ever feel that you can't go to someone to talk.