

AFTER THE FIRST YEAR . . . THEN WHAT?



BALLARAT
HOSPICE
CARE INC.

Home Based Palliative Care

The first year of bereavement brings raw pain, disbelief, the agony of reality and many other deep emotions – emotions many of us have never experienced or at least not to the same depth. Remember, grief is different for everyone. It is like fingerprints or snowflakes; no two are alike. Everyone grieves differently, so don't compare yourself to others or place yourself on a timetable.

Some of the following suggestions/ observations may help you

1. You may be experiencing a different level of reality and you no longer deny the death and its long term implications.
2. You may or may not cry as often as you did at first, but if you do, don't fight the tears. "Cry when you have to – laugh when you can".
3. Physical symptoms may become more acute (e.g. stomach disorders, headaches, sleeplessness). Have a check-up with your GP.
4. Your grief may seem "out of control". You may feel as if you are "going crazy". This is common to bereaved people. It is important to realize working through your grief takes time, much more time than you think it should. Be patient with yourself.
5. Be aware you may experience lowered self-esteem. You may have unrealistic expectations about how you handle your grief – you are probably doing better than you think.
6. Vibes from friends may openly or subconsciously be, "Shape up – you must be over it now. Get on with living," etc. You not only experience the death of a loved one, but you feel abandoned by friends and even family. Find others to talk with who understand.
7. If you feel guilty, it must be acknowledged – not suppressed. Really look at the "if onlys." Hopefully YOU and only you will be able to say to yourself, "I did the best that I could at the time – so did my loved one."
8. Set realistic goals for the future – realistic is the key word. Pinpoint your most acute concerns. Think of all possible solutions. Choose one solution at a time and act on it.
9. So many of us find it difficult to ask for help. Asking for help from caring people can make a big difference. Allow yourself to reach out for help.
10. If you do slide back into "the pits", don't panic, even though you will hate this feeling. Irrationally you may feel that you will remain there. It is important to realise that you have been in "the pits" before and you have survived.