

## The “Mourning” After Loss

What happens in the days and weeks following the [loss](#) of a longtime spouse? The answer is different for everyone. Friends and family may help ease the transition for a time, but there will come a day when you must move forward and face the changes in your life.

### Taking care of you

Grief can make it difficult to pay attention to the important things in life. However, *you must take care of yourself*. Get plenty of [physical activity](#), which not only helps build physical strength but can also act as a distraction and keep your mind off what’s missing. Sleep is important, too, as fatigue can exacerbate feelings of depression. Try to avoid filling the void with drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes, as these only offer a temporary respite from reality. If you haven’t had a physical in a while, make an appointment with your doctor or healthcare provider. Take this time to discuss any physical or emotional issues you may need help with. Tell your doctor if you are having trouble performing everyday activities or staying on-task.

### Staying social

One of the last things you may want to do after losing a husband or wife is socialize. However, grief is easier to grasp in a group. A grief [support group](#) is an excellent option to help you share your feelings about your sudden loss. The transition, while still painful, may be eased a bit if you engage in dialogue with others who are also grieving. Grief support groups are often held once or twice a week at hospitals, churches, or community outreach centers. In addition to emotional support, visiting with others outside of the home will keep you from falling into a pattern of social isolation. If you have close friends and family, take them up on their offers of the company and comfort. The grieving process isn’t something you should have to face alone.

### A helping hand

Adjusting to a new life after spousal loss is one of the hardest things you will ever do. There are changes to your daily routine that you may not have had time to consider, including how and when you watch television to having to learn to [cook for one](#). Seek assistance to help you with household chores, such as cooking and cleaning, for the first few months. Having a housekeeper come even once a week can alleviate stress and reduce your anxiety over your new living situation. Since most married couples divide up household tasks and chores, it can be extremely beneficial to have an extra set of hands around until you learn how to manage unfamiliar task such as grocery shopping, paying bills, or mowing the lawn.

### Major changes can wait

After a significant loss, a knee-jerk reaction is to change everything about your life. You may be tempted to initiate a major change such as moving, taking a new job, or radically altering your appearance. Don’t make any rash [decisions](#) under duress, as you may find it harder to grieve

without access to the people, places, and things you find most comforting. Contrary to instinct, it is not emotionally healthy to remove the reminders of your lost love before you have had a chance to truly say goodbye. Remember the rest of your family is also adjusting and any major changes you make will affect your children and grandchildren.

### **Don't feign your feelings**

The loss of a loved one is a significant life event and one that takes time to recover from. Mourning is a long and emotional process and one you can only complete if you're honest with yourself about how you're feeling. If you're finding it difficult facing your emotions, consider taking part in a bereavement program. Programs like [this one](#) offered by Neptune Society offer personal stories and other resources to help guide you through the grieving process.



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