

Strategies for Growing in Grief

Loss is an inevitable part of living. Hospice Mid Canterbury deals with the grief of loss on a daily basis, from diagnosis of a life-limiting illness to the loss of a loved one. This is one of a series of articles on how to manage grief.

You can do more than just cope with loss. The following can help you grow as you journey with your grief.

Build on your strengths

Look back at previous challenges or losses. What strategies helped you then? They can be helpful now. For example, keeping to regular routines may be reassuring for you. Others find it useful to walk or exercise to lift their mood. Sometimes you may have to reframe your previous strategies so they suit your current situation.

Your spirituality or personal values also can be a great strength. Ask yourself, how do my beliefs help me as I face this loss? Talk to those who share your beliefs.

Use your support systems

Your family, friends and co-workers can be of great help. Some may be good listeners while others are good at helping in more practical ways. You can also find support in others who have had similar experiences. Mutual support can help you become more aware of your own strengths.

Remember the continuing bond

The people you love never fully leave you. You retain a bond with them through your memories, and the ways they influenced you as a person. Focus on positive memories. Sometimes it helps to have something to reinforce those memories such as putting together a photo collection or a journal to keep those memories alive.

Use empowering language

If you always focus on the sadness of loss, you reinforce that sadness. Instead, focus on positive language such as the courage you will need to meet the challenges of loss. Recognize that you make choices on how you cope with your grief. Learn from the decisions you make. Even small choices reinforce your ability to cope as you journey with loss.

Focus on growth

Now and then, think about how you have changed as you journey with grief. What new insights have you developed? What skills have you gained?

Be patient with yourself. The journey with grief is uneven as you learn to live a different life without a person you loved. As you grieve, expect both good and bad days. Some days you may be more productive than others. That, too, is part of the journey.

Remain hopeful

Life after loss will be different. But as hard as it may be to believe now, it can still have joy and happiness. Keep sight of the future. Focus on where you wish to be next week, next month, or next year. Think of the small daily changes you can make to bring you closer to your goal. Remember that while we have no choice about loss or the grief that follows, we do have choices about how we grieve. Choose growth.