

## Getting There

Time keeps marching on, we cannot stop the world while we heal. Little by little, you will feel better, a tiny bit at a time. The painful feelings will diminish, which means that they'll fade so that they don't hurt so much. Sometimes it's hard to recognize that you are actually getting better. If that's the case, think about the moment that you found out that this death happened and think about how you feel now. Do you feel different at this moment? (Not necessarily better, but different.) You need to feel all the emotions of grief, and some of them are worse than others. If you're continuing to work at this grieving thing, then chances are pretty good that you are making progress.



Progress doesn't mean forgetting about the person who died. That is everyone's greatest fear. You want to always remember what they

sounded like, looked like how they laughed and everything about them. Don't worry. All of those memories are stored safe and sound in your heart. *No one* can take those memories from you they are yours to keep forever. As you begin to let go of the pain, you'll find that you can store all of those memories in a special place in your mind. It is like putting away the pictures you drew in kindergarten. You put them in a box, but you know that they're there, and you can look at them whenever you want to. After you look at them, you also have the power to put them back. Just as your kindergarten pictures don't have to stay spread out all over your bedroom floor, your pain doesn't have to stay in the front of your thoughts. You can let the pain go because you know that the memories will always be with you.

Everything that you knew about that special person is still there. The only difference is that you carry them inside of you now. Very slowly, you learn

that you can go on, even though someone you loved has died. You learn that all you had with that person is not lost, it is still there inside of you. You learn that even though grieving is a miserable, awful and terrible thing, you are really glad that you had that loved one in your life. You will not want to trade those experiences just to remove this time of hurt. Be patient with yourself, as you work through your grief. You'll find that you can do it, day by day. ***I know you can!***



*If you are feeling overwhelmed and have thoughts that frighten you:*

- \* **Do seek out professional help.**
- \* **Talk with your parents, grandparents or any trusted adult.**
- \* **Talk with a school counselor, pastor or rabbi.**
- \* **Call your local crisis line.**

*Whatever your feelings, others have had them too.*

***There is hope and there is help.***

*"This Thing Called Grief"*

*was based on inspirations from Jaime Schum. It was compiled and written by Nancy Moeller, LSW, CADC through Conley Publications.*

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# This Thing Called Grief



**Just for teens**

*"My heart cannot believe,  
what my mind tells me is true.  
I never thought this day could come,  
The news just can't be true!"*



*Provided through the care of:*

**Conley Funeral Home**  
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***Someone really important to you has died. Things right now may seem really hopeless. To be honest, they seem completely hopeless.***

The “experts” call the time after the loss of a loved one, grief. Grieving can be the result of any number of occurrences in your life: the loss of a friend, a family member or a beloved pet. You may even find that same feeling of pain and loss when a special relationship ends or you have to move away from the home you grew up in.

For the most part, grieving is an empty, painful feeling, especially when someone has died and you know that you won't see them again on this earth. That hurts. It hurts because you feel that they are gone forever, that their death wasn't fair or it wasn't their time. You may still have things you wanted to tell them or you may even have had angry words with them, a disagreement that was unresolved. The whole thing is frustrating because *knowing* that people die is one thing and **feeling** the loss due to death is quite another thing.

### **The Grief Thing**

Sometimes you don't even know that you are grieving. Neon lights won't flash above your head and say, “I'm grieving and not liking it.” Your first clue is that a whole tangle of feelings are swirling around inside of you. At first, you may feel anything from denial (you just can't believe it happened) to extreme sadness (you understand death happens, but not why it happened to someone you loved). Isolation and loneliness rank right up there in the “top ten” list of emotions that you may be feeling. Anger, anxiety, confusion, frustration, hate, despair, fear and hopelessness also fight for the top spots.

You might feel depressed or have extreme mood swings or see a BIG change in the way you behave. All of this is pretty normal - you want to protect yourself so that you won't get hurt anymore. The weird thing about this is that you probably don't even know you're grieving!

It might feel like you will never be happy again. The truth is that you may be right. The feeling,

“happy,” might be different for you now. Things have changed, and what you thought was “happiness” may also change. When you are faced with a death, it is like you just don't feel safe anymore. No matter what your age is, life seems so complicated, so hard to figure out.

The whole load of *emotions* that you feel, which includes not feeling *anything*, are natural and normal. But, somewhere inside it's important that you stay in touch with what is going on. It is easy to begin questioning everything and life can look pretty meaningless.

If you do feel that way, you need to stop and think. You're probably saying, “*Well, right about now, I've had all the thinking I can take and I just can't do it anymore.*” If you can't think, then walk away from it, do something different for awhile: take a walk, sing along with a favorite CD, go work out or run, dance, write in a journal, talk to someone or play a computer game. Give your brain a rest, decide you'll think more about life and think about death later. Those feelings that you've been dealing with won't disappear. Remember, they are powerful stuff.

### **Now What?**

What are you supposed to do when grief hits your world? The absolute best thing to do is TALK to other people! Although that sounds like a tough thing to do, it helps, it *really* does! Search for people to talk to who will listen, no matter how upset or angry you may be. Others may have feelings like yours, even though it doesn't show on the outside. Don't be afraid to talk to a friend or a classmate. You might be surprised to find that others *really care* about you and the pain that you are feeling.

There may be some friends who can't be there for you in the way that you need them to be. They might try to avoid you, cheer you up, be overly sweet or cheerful. Inside, you might feel angry with some friends whose lives seem to be going along just fine while yours is being torn apart. You may be tempted to isolate yourself by pulling away or you might find yourself being angry with your friends. All of these

feelings are normal when someone you love has died. Keep reaching out, keep talking, keep letting your emotion find a safe place to express itself.

You also need to talk with your parents, your friends' parents or some other trusted adult: a teacher, counselor, pastor or rabbi. Adults don't like to see kids upset and in pain. They may say things such as: “*you need to get over it*” or “*you've got to get on with your life*”. Easier said than done, right? They mean well, but they may not get the picture. Keep looking for that understanding adult who can listen and relate to where you are coming from. Remember that though it is difficult, there are things that cannot be explained. A good example is the question, “*Why?*”. People can usually tell you what happened and how it happened, but nobody has the answer to *why* it happened.

### **Good News!?**

Take a deep breath. There is a little good news. Strange as it might sound, time does pass, and somehow things improve. It doesn't happen by magic; you really have to work at it and it's hard, hard work. Keep talking to people, that's important! You might even find someone who has had a similar experience, felt pain and loss like yours. Seek out books that have a helpful message. Write your own: personal reflections and feelings, poetry, a story or a song. You don't need to share your writings unless you want to, they are your private thoughts. Write a letter to the one who died and tell them all the things you are feeling or wanted to say to them. Of course you can't mail it, but it may be possible to put it in a sealed envelope in the casket. (You need the families permission to do this.) If that isn't an option you can burn the letter and release the ashes into the wind. Put into words all of the feelings that are bundled up inside of you: hurt, anger, love, wishes and even the pain. Remember, you loved this person in some special way and they loved you back. That “love” is why you are having so much trouble with “*this thing called grief*”.