



THE TWELVE FREEDOMS OF GRIEF

or other emotions. Sometimes they may come simultaneously or follow each other within a short period of time. It is important to know that these emotions are normal responses to the death of a loved one, even though you may be feeling overwhelmed at the time.

Freedom #4: You have the freedom to allow for numbness. Part of the grief experience includes feeling numb or disoriented when a loved one dies. It allows your emotions to “catch up” with what you know intellectually and allows you to be insulated from the reality of the death until you can tolerate what you don’t want to believe.

Freedom #5: You have the freedom to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits. You may feel very tired as a result of your feelings of loss and sadness. Your low energy level may impair your ability to see things clearly and to make decisions. It is important to nurture yourself by getting daily rest, eating balanced meals, and lowering your expectations of yourself.

Freedom #6: You have the freedom to experience grief attacks or memory embraces. You may experience “surges of grief” or flashbacks (memory embraces), which can be frightening and leave you feeling overwhelmed. These feelings are normal. Try to find someone who understands how you’re feeling and is willing to listen.

Freedom #7: You have the freedom to develop a

support system. Although reaching out to others and accepting their help may be difficult, finding people who will provide the understanding you need and who will let you be yourself may be the best action you can take on your own behalf.

Freedom #8: You have the freedom to make use of ritual. The funeral ritual serves the dual purpose of acknowledging the death of a loved one and allowing you to express grief. It also provides you with the support of caring people who are also grieving.

Freedom #9: You have the freedom to embrace your spirituality. Express your faith in whatever way that seems appropriate to you. Try to have people around you who support your religious beliefs. You may feel hurt and abandoned and may feel angry at God because of the death of someone you loved. However it is important to realize that this feeling is a normal part of grief. Try to find someone who won’t be judgmental about your feelings and who will allow you to explore your thoughts and feelings.

Freedom #10: You have the freedom to allow a search for meaning. “Why did he/she die?” or, “Why now?”. This search for meaning is often another normal part of the healing process. Some questions have answers; many do not. Actually, healing occurs in the opportunity to pose the questions, not necessarily in answering them. Supportive friends will listen.

Freedom #1: You have the freedom to realize your grief is unique. Others may grieve in different ways than you because your experience will be influenced by a variety of factors, including the relationship you had with the person who died; circumstances of death whether it was sudden or expected; your support system and your cultural and religious background. It is important not to compare oneself with others who are grieving, and to consider the “one day at a time” approach to allow yourself to proceed at your own pace.

Freedom #2: You have the freedom to talk about your grief. By expressing your grief openly, healing occurs and you are likely to feel better. Ignoring it will not make your grief go away. It is important to seek out caring friends and relatives who will listen without judging.

Freedom #3: You have the freedom to expect to feel a multitude of emotions. Your head, heart, and spirit will be affected when you are experiencing loss. As a result, you may experience, disorganization, fear, guilt, relief,

Freedom #11: You have the freedom to cherish your memories. Treasure the memories of your loved one who has died. Share them with your family and friends. Recognize that your memories may make you laugh or cry. In either case, they are a lasting part of the relationship that you had with a very special person in your life.



Freedom #12: You have the freedom to move through your grief and heal. The capacity to love requires the necessity to grieve when someone you loved dies. You cannot heal unless you openly express your grief. Denying your grief will only make it become more confusing and overwhelming. Embrace your grief and heal. Reconciling grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant of yourself. Never forget that the death of someone you loved changes your life forever. It's not that you will never be happy again; it's simply that you will never be exactly the same as you were before the death.



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