

The New Normal



Grief can feel impossible to describe, but for most it is the process of adjusting to the death of someone important and creating a new, stable life. From this perspective, grief is the process of finding a “new normal” without your loved one. Discovering what this means, as an individual and as a family, can be challenging for many different reasons, but two common feelings may contribute to the difficulty of this task:

- **Feeling resistant.** You may feel that you were happy with your family as it was, you didn’t ask for this, and/or you would actually prefer to have your “old normal” back.
- **Feeling overwhelmed.** As Evan Hadkins (2010) said, “Normal is made up of lots of little things as well as big things. And so, when we suffer a loss, we can feel disoriented with so many things to do... .”

These are very real and painful feelings, and simply learning how to be with these feelings may be a family’s new normal in the period immediately following the death. However, there is hope for a different, stable, and less painful future. As others have said:

- “The old normal is gone...after a period of intense pain, you’ll be different. The person you were is gone. It is an amputation. Eventually, a new person will emerge. It will be the new normal (Edwards, 2011).”
- “Two-and-a-half years later, I have a better grasp on what my own ‘new normal’ is. And, I get it. Life isn’t necessarily worse for me...it’s just different (Becky, 2014).”

There is no better or worse new normal. There is no right or wrong amount of time to reach your new normal. And perhaps most frustrating of all, there is no way to speed up the process of reaching this new destination, but fellow grievers and practitioners offer some questions that may be helpful in the process:

- What have I/we learned?
- Who do I/we want to spend time with?
- How do I/we want to live?
- What things, practices, and traditions do I/we want to be a part of my/our new normal?
- What activities and coping skills are helpful?
- How do I/we want to be in the future?

Answering these questions may help you define and begin to live your new normal.

Further Reading:

For Adults

- *Life After Loss* by Bob Deits
- *A New Normal* by Darlene Cross

For Children

- *The Grief Bubble* by Kerry DeBay



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References:

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- Edwards, C. (2011). When your husband has died: A survival guide. Publisher: Author.
- Hadkins, E. (2010, June 28). Good grieving: Finding a new normal. Retrieved from <http://blogsinmind.com/lib/2010/06/28/good-grieving-finding-a-new-normal/>



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