

# TIPS FOR COPING WITH ISOLATION IN GRIEF

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When we are grieving, sometimes we think that it is easier to just isolate ourselves to not have to face other people and situations that may seem uncomfortable.

The first Christmas after losing my daughter, I planned to join my husband's family for the annual holiday meal. On the morning of Christmas day, that year, I made a salad, which I had offered to contribute for the meal menu. I sat at the kitchen table, in deep sadness. I knew that another family member, who had a newborn baby, was going to be at the family gathering. I could not imagine myself being able to "handle" being there. I could not imagine walking in and being able to "act" like everything was ok. My baby had died, nothing was okay, the holiday had arrived. I ended up not going to the dinner. I had some people disappointed, but, I had to not care. My pain had overcome me and I just could not go. There were many times, during my early grief that I felt that staying home was my best option. This was okay and it is okay for you too. Had I still felt that way for a very long time after my loss, then that would be another conversation. Take the time you need to do what is best for you. Not what is best for anyone else. Isolating yourself in early grief, is normal. Continuing to isolate yourself will not be good for your mental health in the long run. I think grief teaches us that we can be in a room full of people and still feel the loneliest we have ever felt. I promise you this will lessen with time.

Below are some tips to consider.

- Try to identify who in your circle of family and friends provides the most support to you and with whom you are most comfortable sharing and accepting care from?
- Try not to shut out those people who you identify with. For some of us, that may be only one person. Be honest with them about your emotional state.
- To share your grief when you feel it is honest and courageous. Doing so will avoid stuffing it in and it the grief finding other ways out that will not be healthy.
- Let others know if and when you need to be alone. Being alone is not bad. Sometimes it can be exhausting dealing with other people.
- Identify what makes you feel most lonely and try to alter your routines and surroundings to make those times less lonely.
- Help others despite your pain. Serving others is a great way to escape your feelings and gain a different perspective, if only for a little while. Nobody can grief 24/7, not one of us would survive that!
- I have found tremendous encouragement and understanding by listening to podcasts, watching videos, and reading books about people who have gone through similar experiences to mine.
- Changing scenery to get your mind off things can be helpful. You can take a walk or a drive, or a mini getaway. Just remember, you will take your grief with you. Looking at a different horizon can be helpful for your spirit.
- Join a grief/bereavement support group. Most people report that they realized that they are not alone.

Know that this time in your life will get easier. I wish I can tell you how long it will take, but I can't. What I can tell you is what matters is not the time that goes by, rather it is what you do with your time. Maybe some of these tips can help pass some time!