

SHOULD OR SHOULD NOTS

Following are common questions about what people should or should not do, and in what timeframe. There are no **should** or **should not** standards. Your journey through grief and the reconciliation process is unique to you. Do whatever feels right to your heart.

If the question concerns the space you personally live in, the decision is yours alone. If other family members share that space, then it is important to communicate with one another about what your needs and expectations are.

Following are common questions and suggestions.

Should I clear out my loved one's personal belongings? How soon should I be doing this?

Some people find it cathartic to handle their loved one's belongings. Others find it painful. Still others find comfort by leaving their clothes, personal items, tools, and other such stuff in place. There is no inappropriate window. As long as keeping your loved one's belongings does not involve any bizarre behavior or cause ongoing stress, there is no time limit. If these things are perceived by others as taking up space, it is your decision how you fill your space. This may upset family members who believe that they know what is best for you. Gently remind them that this is something you need to do in your own time, and you'll know when the time is right.

Should I sell my home or move to a different location?

If possible, wait to make this decision as long as it is financially reasonable to do so. The process of packing and moving adds extra stress to your life, and can distract you from your griefwork. Additionally, moving to new, unfamiliar surroundings can be very stressful for some. Changing your surroundings will not take your grief away. Your grief will move with you wherever you go. If you need to move, know that you will need additional support, emotionally and otherwise.

How regularly should I visit the cemetery?

How often you visit your loved one's final resting place is a very personal choice. Some people find comfort by doing so, and report feeling closer to their loved one. Others cannot bring themselves to go to the cemetery. Some people visit every day, even several times a day. Others feel guilty for not visiting enough, or not at all. Go if it brings you comfort. If you would like to visit and cannot do this alone, bring along a trusted friend or family member for emotional support.

Should I celebrate the upcoming holiday or my loved one's birthday?

The first birthday and holidays following a loss can be very difficult. Many people feel anything but festive, and just want the holidays to go away.

Anticipating an upcoming holiday, birthday or anniversary creates a great deal of stress for people who are grieving. Oftentimes, the anticipation of the day can be worse than the day itself. Do only what you can in the days prior.

It may be helpful to ask a friend to take care of the things that are making you feel anxious. Try not to worry about expectations of others. You do not have to take care of anyone or anything, unless you choose to do so.

If you have family traditions in which you feel you cannot host or participate, communicate your feelings to those who are involved in the festivity. If at first you feel you can participate, know that it is okay to change your mind. On the other hand, you may not accept an invitation, and when the day arrives, you feel you could go. Do what feels right to you **in the moment**. Most people will understand, and you do not have to explain yourself either way.

I'm mad at God but afraid to admit that. Should I tell someone?

Many mourners find themselves mad at God or their church. Sometimes they even question their faith. This is more common than not. Find a spiritual mentor whom you can talk to freely, and be honest about your feelings. Chances are that you aren't the first person who has come to them with such feelings, and he or she might have sage advice that will help you process the strong emotions.

If you aren't comfortable talking to someone in your church, give it to God. He hears you, loves you, and won't strike you down for mourning so deeply. He created you as a human, with human emotions. Remember that your grief is a testament to the love you have for one of His children. He gets it. He really does.