

Coping With Multiple Losses

Zusman Hospice Bereavement Support



Sometimes we experience more than one loss in a relatively short period of time. It may seem we are just learning to live with one loss when another comes along. Besides the death of a loved one, there are many other losses in life that can trigger grief reactions. These can include divorce, retirement, workplace changes, children leaving home, moving and changes in health. It is important to understand that we frequently grieve over such changes. Even if we haven't identified our feelings as grief, we know that we're not functioning as well as usual, both emotionally and physically.

When we are experiencing more than one life event that is causing us to grieve, there are certain things we can do to cope more effectively.

Have Realistic Timetable for Grieving

The more extensive the injuries, the longer the healing period. Be sure that your expectations for yourself are realistic. Give yourself as much time as you need to heal. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that you would be healing faster if you were stronger, smarter or had more faith. Grief takes a long time, and it is normal to become impatient with the process. With multiple losses, sometimes we get tired of grieving so much, even though it is appropriate. We should be careful not to compare ourselves to others since each loss is unique.

Resist Becoming Bitter

When facing multiple losses, one of the great challenges is not becoming bitter or cynical. At times, we may feel the universe has singled us out for punishment. We may wonder what we've done to deserve such calamity. An important part of our growth through grief is to come to terms with these feelings so they do not permanently embitter us. At some point, we must choose to identify ourselves as survivors, or we risk becoming permanent victims.

Focus on Self-Care Activities

One way we survive multiple losses is by taking good care of ourselves. We need to pay attention to our needs for rest, nutrition and activities that refresh our spirit. A thorough physical exam can help address the impact of stress on our bodies. Regular physical activity is an effective outlet for frustration and anger.

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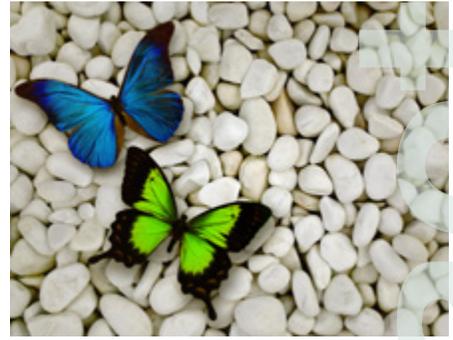
Utilize Sources for Support

We need as much support as we can get in the months after a loss or losses. Grief can be isolating and we often have questions about whether our feelings are normal. Sometimes, the person or people we lost were the ones we would normally turn to at times of stress. Books on the grief process can help, and support groups provide a valuable outlet for feelings. Many people who join grief support groups are dealing with multiple challenges. Certain friends and family members may turn out to be particularly supportive, while others disappoint us. We need to be selective about who we spend time with. Individual counseling is also an option.

Some of us work in occupations in which we are routinely exposed to loss, tragedy and disturbing levels of change. Certain healthcare and public safety jobs regularly expose us to some of life's more dramatic and painful moments. As we age, we lose peers and family members. We have to adjust to the impact of age on our bodies and poor health may mean the loss of independent living. Even the end of parenting or retirement from a workplace can cause profound grief.



Made possible by the Alice & Robert Estrich Fund of The Columbus Foundation.



Grief support is available to you and your loved ones from the Zusman Hospice Bereavement Staff.

We offer support through phone calls, individual counseling and group sessions.

Please contact us at **614-559-0350.**

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