



Tasks of Grieving

Adapting to loss can often be facilitated by engaging in the following tasks. They do not need to be addressed in any particular order, although accepting the loss is often an essential first step. The various tasks may be revisited more than once.

- Accept the reality of the loss.

Accepting that someone has died is a process, not a decision. As this is accomplished, the grieving person no longer feels disbelief. Talking about the person who died and participating in funerals and other rituals can help.

- Experience the pain.

Following a significant death, emotional pain is a normal response. It can be intense and is often triggered by external stimuli, as well as thoughts and memories. By processing it bit by bit, the intensity eventually lessens. We may still hurt at times, but are able to help ourselves and/or reach out to others.

- Adjust to a world without the person who died.

We may need to take on new roles and responsibilities that were formerly shared or handled by our loved one. We may have to deal with being alone. We also have to find ways to adapt to our workplace, family gatherings, and social activities. Eventually, our ability to function in everyday life returns.

- Develop a new identity.

Our identities may be different as a result of the loss. Who are we without the person who died? It may help to explore the ways we have defined ourselves and how we were influenced by the relationship with the deceased. Eventually, we may gain a new sense of ourselves.

- Restore a sense of meaning and purpose.

We need to make sense of our losses, to create meaning. We may go through a profound search or change in our philosophical or spiritual perspective. We may seek a different direction or purpose in life.

- Find a new connection with person who died, while engaging in life.

Eventually, there is shift in our relationship with our loved one to an internal bond. We continue to keep them with us, while also going on with life and forming new relationships.

Based on the work of William Worden and Alan Wolfelt