

Thoughts and Feelings



It is not uncommon to approach the one-year anniversary of a loss with a combination of hope, dread, and anxiety.



The “One Year of Grief” Myth Coping with the Second Year

Grieving the loss of a loved one is an individual and variable journey. You will have ups and downs. How you feel and how long you grieve will depend on a number of factors, including:

- The closeness and nature of your relationship with the deceased.
- How they died.
- Everyday stress.

Some losses are more difficult to process. Grieving may be delayed due to the need to take care of practical matters, such as estate issues, funeral arrangements, or caring for other family members. You may grieve for longer if you were very close to or dependent on the person who died, or had an ambivalent, conflicted relationship with them. Grief can also be prolonged if you experience subsequent losses, or have intense feelings of guilt or anger.

It is not uncommon to approach the one-year anniversary of a loss with a combination of hope, dread, and anxiety. It is not a date marking the end of grief, like a door we pass through and shut behind us. The past year was filled with getting through all the “firsts,” including the first Thanksgiving and first birthday without your loved one. During the second year loss feels more permanent. It is not unusual to experience unexpected, intense episodes of grief and longing. You may also feel that friends and family are less supportive and say you should be “over it” and getting on with life.

Planning for the first-year anniversary can help you gain a sense of control. Many religions and cultures have well-defined ways of marking this anniversary. You can also develop your own plan or ritual to acknowledge and honor your loved one, which can provide a peaceful way to cope. Honoring the anniversary does not mean that you are trying to forget your loved one or move on. Instead it can help you begin to adjust to life without your loved one while maintaining a meaningful connection with their memory.

Here are some ways to mark the one-year anniversary:

- Visit their grave and spend time in reflection.
- Light a candle.
- Share memories and a special meal with friends and family.
- Perform a random act of kindness.
- Volunteer with organizations that have been important to you or your loved one.
- Make a donation or start a scholarship fund in your loved one's memory.
- Spend time in nature.

- Purchase a memorial tile, or dedicate a bench or other marker that reflects your shared memories or the interests and values of your loved one.
- Plant a tree or garden.

If your grieving is so intense that it impacts your ability to function, call your doctor or Bereavement Coordinator. We have many resources and support groups to help you.

—Joan Engelbart, LCSW, JD, CT,
Kaiser Permanente

Transformation of Loss

Losing a significant person in our lives changes us. We may never be quite the same. Bereavement can make us more patient, compassionate, and caring. In a support or bereavement group you may meet and become friends with people you would not otherwise have met. There is beauty and comfort in walking alongside another who knows the complexity and depth of losing someone you love.

Losing a loved one can also create a tie on a larger scale to the common human experience. Some people discover that they are better prepared to help others dealing with loss. They realize, first hand, that grief

can extend far beyond the funeral, celebration of life event, or the first-year mark. As one woman shared in her support group, when someone she knows loses someone, she no longer uses the phrase “call me if you need something.” Instead, she sends a card, drops off a meal, or calls.

The loss of someone close to you may also bring a new appreciation for everyday events in life, such as enjoying a sunset or

spending time with friends and family. We can transform our grief so that our hearts are open to the companionship of those around us. This gesture can honor those that we have lost.

—*Sheila Clifford, LCSW,*
Kaiser Permanente

“Go into your grief for there
your soul will grow.”

—*Carl Jung*





This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor.

© 2015, TPMG, Inc., All rights reserved. Regional Health Education.
010731-174 (Revised 02/16) RL 7.8 SPANISH