

1. **Survive One Hour at a Time.**

I distinctly remember being given sound advice. I was told to get through **one hour at a time**. As the first day wore on, I recall realizing that I somehow managed to cope with just one hour at a time, because time needed to be experienced through smaller increments, whereas it seemed unbearably impossible to try to go on living without my loved one for weeks, months or years at a time. As each hour passed, I began to feel comforted that I had survived one hour without going completely mad.

Each hour, I began to realize that I could actually go to the bathroom alone, refill my own coffee cup, eat a few bites of food placed before me, and even walk through one room of my house without falling apart. The pain that succumbs you is so overwhelming that everything that has to do with survival has to be broken down into tiny, manageable increments. Before you know it, a whole day has gone by and you have managed to survive.

2. Survive One Day at a Time.

Begin to live one day at a time, accepting the loving comfort that family and friends are so willing to give, but know that some down time of quiet solitude is also important.

In the next few days I began to realize that although my family and friends had wonderful, sincere intentions, I had to allow myself just a few quiet moments alone to collect my thoughts and to just fall to pieces. Most people couldn't bear to watch me fall apart, and ultimately, in hindsight, that's exactly what I needed to do. What most people don't understand is that to hold in such a huge amount of pain is actually dangerous to a person's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. At the time, I felt as though my heart had been completely crushed, ripped out, shredded, and then somehow put back into my body as a hardened lump of clay. The sensation in my chest was as though I had a cement block weighing down on it all times. This coupled with intense headaches due to lack of sleep and rest made me feel like a walking zombie. But at the end of each day I'd somehow managed to drift off into sleep, and the next day would come, even if I didn't necessarily welcome it.

3. Take Care of Yourself.

Remember to eat, try to get enough rest, and keep all things that are harmful to you (such as alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, and too much stimuli) at a minimum.

Ultimately, the initial first few days are the hardest. Simple bodily functions are no longer second nature. After you have been a nurturing caregiver to another living, breathing human being, and that person no longer requires your guidance and care because he or she has left this earth, **you are no longer the person you used to be.**

It's like having a stroke and you have to learn to walk and talk again, except in this case, you may remember to walk and talk, but you don't know how to eat, sleep, dream, or love. You may not even remember how to care for yourself or for anyone else. All of these have to be learned again. In essence, you begin to reinvent yourself.

When you start to feel your sanity slip, do whatever positive thing you can think of to hold on: pray, meditate, go get a full body massage at a spa, scream at the sky, take a trip to a new place, stare at sunsets, lay in an open field and watch the clouds drift, or do all of these things at once: **Just do something for you!** And don't feel guilty about being selfish about it. You can't do anything for others if you don't take care of yourself first. You can't be loving to others if you aren't loving to yourself first. Then, when you start to feel a sense of renewal, think about extending the love you still want to express for your child in a way that will benefit others. Believe it or not, there will always be someone else who has experienced greater sadness and loss. If you truly understand that we are all connected, you begin to understand that the dynamics of your heartache and how you handle it can be a source of comfort and inspiration for others.

4. Have Faith.

The first thing I want to address here is that most of the studies show that parents who have strong faith usually have stronger coping skills because of their willingness to admit that there are higher powers for which we cannot comprehend. Of course, the first thing that I did (but have always done and continue to do) was **ASAP: Always Say A Prayer**. I have witnessed this power over and over again in my life experiences. Often, it seems easier to pray when you're heartbroken and downtrodden, and sometimes we forget to pray when things are going well. If you have never been a prayerful person, maybe this is a good time to start. A silly movie comes to mind that had a wonderful quote:

"Be the miracle." We each can be a miracle no matter what situation we may find ourselves in. If we, as parents who have lost our children, can find a way to be the miracle, it will be that we can learn to carry our burden of sadness no matter how heavy laden and weak we are. ASAP: Again, believe it to be true for you and it will be. How will you know if it works if you haven't tried it?

5. Keep Yourself Busy.

Find something to do to keep yourself occupied so that you aren't so caught up in that cycle of loneliness and despair.

When you struggle with having a will to live?

Force yourself to do things that you regularly *didn't* enjoy: Clean house, washed windows, keep the fridge spotless. Stayed busy. One of the main things that demand your attention is that you still have a wonderful family that need you: Knowing that they were taking cues from you in how to cope with tragedy may give you some strength in getting through the routines of living week to week, and month to month.

Try to occupy your own time and mind with something that will make you feel useful.

Picking out pictures of your loved one are especially important for immortalizing into the frame your loved ones honor. This tells you and the world that your loved one is still alive in your heart, and that you could never use the past tense of the word, "love," in referring to them.

6. Keep a Journal.

Turn your obsession with your loved one into something positive and concrete: Keep a journal. This will help to change a negative into a positive.

One of the things that people don't understand is that parents need to continue talking about their child, recounting and reliving every little thing he did or said, good or bad.

Talking about them and reminiscing allows us to hold onto these precious memories.

7. Seek Out Positive Addictions.

Positive activities will enable you to regain a sense of centeredness.

8. Give Yourself Permission to Grieve.

Give yourself permission to grieve, irregardless of what other people need or expect of you.

9. Survive One Day at a Time. Again.

Anticipating holidays, your birthday, your individual family members' birthdays, and especially the birthday of your loved one who has died, can bring up so many bittersweet, painful memories. If you feel that you're too weak to handle them, know this: the pain you feel is a reflection of the great love you continue to have for your loved one.

"You hurt because you love."

So be at liberty to cry, wail, and moan. You deserve to feel this way.

10. Give of Yourself and Connect to Others Who Hurt

Do volunteer work, delve into a project in which you comfort others, and/or allow your love for your loved one to manifest itself in doing positive, creative things that can enrich other peoples' lives. The best way to cope with sorrow is to console another.

1. **Seek and Accept Support.** You cannot travel this path alone. You need the support and care of others.
2. **Accept Your Grief.** Don't try to run and hide from your grief. You need to experience the pain and sorrow to be able to move past it and on towards healing.
3. **Find Role Models.** You are not the first to travel the road of grief. Discover how others have coped with loss before you. This will provide you with a model to base your own healing on and remind you that you are not alone.
4. **Learn About Grief.** The more you know about grief and dispel the [myths](#) surrounding it, the more you will realize that your grief is normal. You may also discover warning signs that your grief may be [complicated](#) and that you need more help to cope. Either way, knowledge is power.
5. **Express Your Grief.** Grief cannot stay hidden deep within you. The best way to work through grief is to let it out. Cry, scream, and yell if need to. Expressing your feelings is the only true way to honor your grief and begin to work through it.
6. **Accept Your Feelings.** Grief can surface many different feelings...some very intense. Acknowledge these feelings and accept them as part of the natural grieving process. Don't hold in anger, sadness, or longing. These are important feelings that, once expressed, help you heal.
7. **Pace Yourself.** Grief can be exhausting. It takes a lot of energy to feel so intensely. Allow yourself plenty of time to do everyday activities and don't over-schedule yourself. Rest when you need to and offer yourself some grace.
8. **Get Involved in Something.** Getting involved in work or some other activity you enjoy can keep you focused and offer a welcome distraction from your grief. If that activity is especially meaningful or helpful to others, you might find it also raises your spirits.
9. **Have a Little Fun.** Sometimes grieving people won't allow themselves to have any fun - as if sharing a laugh with someone is somehow dishonoring the memory of their loved one. The truth is laughter is excellent medicine. A great way to have some genuine fun is to surround yourself with children or animals.
10. **Keep the Faith.** Remember that intense grief doesn't last forever. One of my favorite sayings goes "Faith is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to go on when fear is present". Keep the faith that you will one day heal and be whole again.