

LOSS OF A PARENT

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The loss of our parents is not totally unexpected. When the death of a parent actually arrives however, it is usually a shock. Know that your life will change in some fashion depending on the relationship you had with your parent. Realize that intense grief may take one to three years but you will always notice the loss.



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1. **Expect your grief to be intense:** We all know our parents are going to die. We just never expect it to happen to us. Losing a parent usually is losing a chunk of your life. Do not be alarmed if your grief is deeper than you anticipated.
2. **Grieving will hit at the oddest times:** Many of us do not realize how we rely on our parents throughout our lives. After the loss of a parent you may discover how you relied on them. Knowing grief may hit at odd times will lessen the shock.
3. **Watch for change:** Your remaining family members and nuclear family will most likely change. The surviving parent will grieve, change and rely on remaining family members in a different fashion. Each sibling will handle grief differently. Do not take it personally if family members withdraw or become clingy.
4. **Crying is good:** Crying is a natural outlet of grief. Let the tears flow in public or private places. Do not apologize for your tears. Crying may even help you feel better for the short term.
5. **Losing the future:** Depending on when a parent dies determines the grieving you will do for the loss of the future. Will you be missing a parent at your wedding? Graduation? Birth of a Child? Your grief may be compounded by how many future events you will have lost with your parent.
6. **Write letters:** Write letters to your parent as if they were still here. It will help get your emotions on paper. This process will help you grieve and then heal. Keep the letters or put them in a place that is special to you.
7. **Get Support:** Join a support group of people who are grieving or who have lost a parent. Strength does lie in numbers when it comes to grieving. You also will be with people who understand your pain. If a support group is not working for you, find a grief therapist.
8. **Watch for depression:** Losing a parent is different for each person. Even individual family members will react differently. Watch to see if you are still sad and grieving intensely after a few months from the death. Signs of depression are: troubles with sleeping too much or too little, weight gain or loss, inability to concentrate and lack of interest, and thoughts of suicide.
9. **Unresolved issues:** You may experience problems during your grieving because of unresolved issues with the deceased parent. Some signs this may be occurring is if your anger gets stronger or doesn't lessen over time. It may be a good opportunity to go see a grief therapist.
10. **Lean on your faith:** Your religious beliefs can be a strong support during your grief. Tell your faith community of your loss. Many religious leaders are also trained in grief counseling and can help you in your time of need.