

# WHEN GRIEF SURPRISES YOU

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*When grief surprises you it can be difficult to know what to do. It becomes at once encompassing and overwhelming. Common events, names, or places can trigger feelings that may have been quiet – sometimes for many years. Do not be alarmed, as there are positive ways to cope with recurring feelings.*





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1. **Stop.** Take a deep breath. Remember it is normal to be reminded of your loss from time to time.
2. **Expect.** Grief will surprise you, over and over again. Expect the surprise factor. Even if you feel you have 'moved on' after your loss, and adjustment has occurred, something unexpected can trigger all the old feelings.
3. **Opportunity.** Make unexpected grief an opportunity to heal in a new or different way. Situations can bring back grief issues that represent another complex layer of your self that needs to be healed or honored in your current life situation.
4. **Share.** Sharing your feelings with a trusted friend or professional can help you cope with and work through the painful feelings that you are experiencing.
5. **Write.** Journaling is a powerful way of working through painful and confusing feelings. Often seeing your emotions and thoughts on paper gives insight or a sense of purging.
6. **Nurture.** Take care of yourself. Don't rush yourself through your painful feelings. Acknowledge them. You worked through these feelings before, and will be able to do so again. Give yourself credit for these nurturing moments.
7. **Time.** Just because a certain length of time has elapsed since your loss, doesn't mean that you should be "over" it. Grief is something that you may never get "over" completely -- you adjust. Be patient.
8. **Change.** You will be changed because of your loss. Remember and accept that there will be times when a life event will remind you of your loss or bring grief anew. Births, deaths, and life change situations such as graduations, birthdays, and anniversaries are especially poignant.
9. **Seek.** Make an effort to seek out friends, professionals, or caring people to help you with the fresh pain or memories. People will wait for you to make the first move, and you need to be aware that you need to reach out to others; they will not make the first overture.
10. **Plan.** Have a plan of action – things to do to take care of yourself – in case grief sneaks up on you. Write it down. Look at the action plan to remind you what you can do NOW. Put yourself in the present moment. Have a plan to move forward. Then...use it.