

Build a Toolbox

If you are struggling with grief, then you will find value in the information this pamphlet provides. It was created to share the many things other individuals have found to be useful during the grief process. These “things” are referred to as “tools”. Everyone discovers tools on their own – but this list provides a good foundation for your “tool box,” and will help get you started on the path to recovery...

Anti-depressants – If your grief is completely overwhelming you, consult with your physician about taking an antidepressant. There is no shame in it. No one is going to give you a medal for toughing it out, so don't suffer needlessly. You're going to hurt no matter what you do, but these at least will enable you to function.

Cry – You don't always have to be stoic or strong. There will be a time and place for strength. When you are sad and distraught, find a quiet place and *let yourself cry*. It's natural and healing to react this way – so let it out. This isn't authorization to do it all day, but it is permissible and beneficial to cry when you need to.

Remember them – Instead of spending all your time trying not to think about your deceased loved one, set aside time each day specifically to *remember them*. Find a place where you can sit uninterrupted, and allow yourself to recall the fond memories you shared. Don't fight the need to reminisce - work *with* your feelings. Make this time a positive and healing thing to look forward to - for as long as you need it.

If you're tired, sleep – The stress and shock our bodies go through is incredible. Learn to listen to what your body is saying to you. If you lay awake all night, then take a nap in the

afternoon. Everything is a little easier if you can get some rest; so if the need arises - sleep - whenever/wherever you can.

Learn to do what you can, when you can – Your energy will come in waves, so utilize it when you have it. Bursts of energy are opportunities to do the things you can't seem to tackle when you're on the low end of the roller coaster. Try to prioritize your tasks and responsibilities; when your vigor returns, you will be ready to take on a few.

Proper diet and exercise – No mystery here...The correct foods will build up your immune system and improve your mental and physical state. Exercise will help with depression, fatigue, and sleep issues. There is no magic potion, so stick to the basics. They have a winning formula.

Minimize the use of alcoholic beverages – Drowning your sorrows in alcohol is an easy thing to do, *but don't do it*. It will make your depression worse and it will stall any progress you might be making toward recovery.

Get out of the house – When you feel yourself getting sucked into the black hole, get in the car and go somewhere. Better yet, pick up a friend and do something together. Being home alone too much can be unhealthy. At the very least, try to leave the confinement of the house and go outside. Get a change of scenery for yourself and some fresh air. Recovery requires action – so move it.

Grief Counseling – Talk therapy is probably the most important tool in your toolbox. Talking to a grief counselor will give you the opportunity to say what's on your mind without being judged. If you don't have the insurance for professional therapy, then contact a community grief group. There are also local chapters of national organizations (i.e.

Survivors of Suicide, The Compassionate Friends) that provide help and support to the bereaved. Select a group that deals with your specific situation and try to attend their meetings. The people who belong to these groups will “get it” and nothing feels better than to be able to share with people who truly understand.

Talk to your friends – If you hesitate to talk about your personal life with strangers, or just aren't ready for a support group – talk to your friends. There are certain things we are only able to discuss with people who know and love us. Getting things out into the open air will improve your state of mind and general well being. It doesn't matter how you get talk therapy; it only matters that *you do*.

Write a letter to your loved one or keep a personal journal – Writing thoughts and feelings down in letters to the deceased can be very helpful. This gives you the opportunity to say the things you wanted to - but didn't - due to the lack of time or opportunity. Some people prefer to keep a personal journal, but it doesn't matter which one you utilize to document your emotions and experiences. Having this personal record allows you to go back and read what you've written later. In review, you'll see how far you have come in your recovery. Sometimes it feels as though you are standing still - This provides proof that you're not.

Allow yourself the right to laugh and enjoy yourself – In the beginning it will take a lot of effort to venture out to social gatherings with your friends. Don't feel pressured to say ‘yes’, but do try to get out once in awhile. You don't have to stay long if you aren't feeling up to it. Your friends will understand! That's just one of the benefits of being with the people who truly care for you.

Get a dog or pet of your choice – There is nothing like unconditional love, and pets have that to offer all day, every day. Their companionship can add value to anyone’s life, but to the bereaved, they truly can be lifesavers.

Make a scrapbook – Creating a scrapbook has many benefits. It can be therapeutic to go through photo albums, selecting your favorite pictures to put into one volume. This also makes it convenient for reminiscing. When the overwhelming urge to see your loved one occurs, you can reach for this book and enjoy the treasure of memories inside. It will be a tangible form of comfort in the days and years to come.

Memory box – This tool can be used to keep the need for physical touch at bay. Inside the box, put a few of the deceased personal items; the ones that you treasure the most. This provides a contained source of comfort. When you feel the need to touch them - touching their things can get you over the hump.

Re-decorate – Just about every grieving person uses decorating as a tool. Rearranging furniture, hanging pictures, placing new accessories, or painting a room will give your home a new feel. This can do wonders for you mentally and is worth the time and effort it takes to physically create change.

Reach out to other grieving families – One day you will be able to help someone else walk this path of grief - like others are doing for you now. It is healing and rewarding to share your story and experiences as you continue to work through your loss.

Read – Explore all types of books. These will help to fill your mind with the promise of something better, instead of constantly dwelling on your sadness or guilt. If you’re

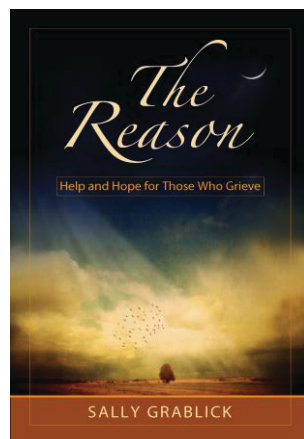
not a reader, try audio books, and listen to what these authors have to say.

Meditation – Grief is something we carry with us, day in and day out. Meditation can give your mind and body a break from that pain. When you practice awareness, you learn to experience only what is right here – right now. Part of recovery resides in the ability to control our thoughts, so we do not have to drag our pain into every minute of every day. Meditation is the tool that can help you do that.



Go to www.thereason-book.com for more information about the author of this brochure and to read an excerpt from her book, *The Reason: Help and Hope for Those Who Grieve*. This book can be ordered at any bookstore and is available at amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

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Build a Grief “Tool Box”



**Useful tools to Help You Cope
with Loss**