

The Grieving Person's Bill of Rights

Though you should reach out to others as you mourn, you don't have to accept the advice that you don't feel is helpful. You are the one who is grieving and you have certain "rights" no one should try to take away from you.

The following list is intended to give you tools to help you heal. It is also to help you decide how others might help you. This list is not meant to keep you from getting help. It is meant to help you figure out what advice will help and what will not.

- 1. You have the right to experience your own unique grief.**
No one else will grieve in exactly the same way you do. When you turn to others for help, don't let them to tell you what you should or should not be feeling.
- 2. You have the right to talk about your grief.**
Talking about your grief will help you heal. Find others who will allow you to talk as much as you want or as often as you want about your grief.
- 3. You have the right to feel many emotions.**
Confusion, feeling "lost", fear, guilt and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief. Others may tell you that feeling certain things, like anger, are wrong. Don't take these to heart. Instead, find listeners who will accept your feelings without condition.
- 4. You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.**
Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you feeling tired. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Get rest every day. Eat balanced meals. Don't allow others to push you into doing things that you don't feel ready to do.
- 5. You have the right to have grief "reactions".**
Sometimes, you may be suddenly distracted and preoccupied by your grief. This can be distressing, but it is normal. Find someone who understands and will let you talk about it.
- 6. You have the right to make your own choices about rituals.**
The funeral or other such ritual does more than acknowledge the death of someone you cared about. It gives you the support of caring people and it is a way for you to mourn. . . If others tell you that these rituals are not necessary, do what feels best for you. If you choose not to take part in a ritual and are feeling pressured to do so, know that you should do what feels right for you.

Alan D. Wolfelt, Director, Center for Loss and Life Transition, Fort Collins, CO

Modified for use in Annapolis Valley Heath, Nova Scotia