

CONTACT US

Email: studentcounselling@up.ac.za

UP Careline: 0800 747 747

Website: www.up.ac.za/student-counselling

Student Counselling Unit

Mental Health Awareness Series

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COPING WITH LOSS & GRIEF

How to let go

When someone we love or care about passes away, it can be very difficult to let go of the emotions that we feel.

Here are 5 **techniques** to help you through the process of letting go.

1.ALLOW YOURSELF TO FEEL THE EMOTIONS

Losing someone is scary, painful, and very upsetting. So many people actually try to bury their feelings in the hope that they do not have to experience them. Unfortunately, that is not very good for you.

LET IT ALL OUT!

CRY, SCREAM, VENT, WALLOW

Keeping emotions bundled up inside actually prolongs the grieving process. For real healing to occur, it is necessary to face these feelings and deal with them.

2.FORGIVENESS

At times, forgiving someone and their bad behaviour can be hard. We often become trapped in our pain and we can't even think about forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not a sign of weakness or even agreeing with the situation but rather it is a tangible way of letting go of the hurt and pain you may feel.

Learn to forgive yourself!

Remember that you also deserve forgiveness. When things go wrong, we tend to blame ourselves and have a hard time accepting our mistakes.

We all make mistakes, it is a part of being human and we should not judge or define our self, based on these mistakes but rather learn and grow from them.

Techniques for self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others

- Talk to a friend or family member.
- Write yourself or another person a letter of forgiveness.
- Write the bad behaviours or mistakes on a balloon and let it go.



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3. RECOGNIZE THAT DEATH-RELATED FEARS ARE NORMAL

Everyone experiences the loss of a loved one in their lifetime, the fear you feel is normal and it is important to know you are not alone. If you feel comfortable, share your feelings with others who have dealt with loss. This can help you feel supported and validate your feelings. Validate your own feelings and fears, it is okay and normal to be fearful or sad.

Techniques: **REFLECTION**

Take a moment and write about your happiest memories with your loved one. Focus on how these moments make you feel and on the love that is present there.

Realise that even without your loved one's presence, this love is still present.

"There is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die... A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance."

4. YOU ARE NOT FORGETTING THEM

It is common to feel torn about feeling better and sometimes we may even want to stay in this pain because we feel that it is the only connection, we have left with our loved one. Sometimes the pain becomes the way we honour our loved ones and our expression of the love we feel for them. But no longer feeling pain does not mean that you are forgetting your loved one because that is not where their memory lives.

It is okay to feel okay, you are allowed to feel better.

Letting go of the loved one does not mean that you are forgetting them or that you don't still love them. Letting go allows you to move past the pain so that you can remember all the good memories of that person. You need to allow yourself to feel the love that you had for that person even in your grief.

5. LETTING GO

What does letting go look like?

- It involves **living in the here and now**.
- Making plans for the future.
- Engaging in interpersonal relationships
- Thinking of the loss no longer evokes extreme emotions. Although it is still there, it's not overwhelming.
- Gradually getting to a place of acceptance about your loss.

Important to note:

Letting go is a process, not a once off event and is different for each person. Do not force it, you will know when you are ready to let go.

Remember - Letting go is not the same as forgetting. It simply means that we are allowing ourselves/giving ourselves permission to move forward, despite the loss.

Letting go activities.

- Writing a letter to the person/loss experienced and bury it or tear it up.
- Write down your fear and if you are comfortable share it with a loved one.