

Self-Care and Self-Compassion in Grief

“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete” (Buddhist Proverb)

Grieving can be emotionally and physically exhausting, a fact which makes self-care and self-compassion vital after a loss. As well, people who are grieving have often spent considerable time caring for their loved one, and may need to recover from the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual demands of those efforts. Developing self-care and self-compassion builds resilience and aids the process of moving into “the new normal.”

Self-Care/Self-Compassion is:

- An attitude of compassion, care and kindness for self in body, mind and spirit rather than harsh self-criticism or a “to do” list.
- Unique to each person rather than “one size fits all.”
- A way to ease the effects of life challenges rather than a way to disconnect or build defenses.
- A personal practice that takes time to develop rather than a one-time event.
- An understanding that life is fragile, flawed and imperfect rather than assuming perfection is the goal in life.

Ways to Develop Self-Care and Self-Compassion:

- Do comforting/soothing things for yourself throughout the day that fit your schedule, personality, energy level and preferences (E.g., tea, short walks, mindful meditation on apps, reading, journaling, art, music, prayer/meditation, and/or pets).
- Connect with supportive people throughout the week through text, email, telephone or in person.
- Make simple healthy lifestyle choices like walking in nature, nutritious meals, good sleep, yoga, and mindfulness meditation.
- Laugh often and much (and be OK with other emotions too).
- Pamper yourself by booking regular appointments for Reiki, Therapeutic Touch, Aromatherapy Hand and Foot Massage at Heart House Hospice, or other therapies you find helpful.
- Limit time with world and local news on TV, radio and newspaper in recognition of the vulnerability of grief.
- Allow yourself time to recover your energy, capacity, and interests in the world around you (a period of cocooning is normal).
- Embrace hobbies of interest (e.g., golf, book clubs, general interest courses, cycling, etc.).

Resources:

Self-Compassion Website, Dr. Kristin Neff <http://self-compassion.org/>

Practical Neuroscience of Lasting Happiness, Dr. Rick Hanson <https://www.rickhanson.net/>