



Coping With Sleep Issues When Grieving

Welcome to this week's discussion.

This week we'll focus on tips for coping with sleep loss while grieving.

Many of us will have lost, or know someone who has lost, a family member, friend or colleague during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bereavement, grief and loss can cause many different symptoms and they affect people in different ways. There's no right or wrong way to feel.

Some of the most common symptoms include:

- Shock and numbness – this is usually the first reaction to loss and people often talk about "being in a daze"
- Overwhelming sadness, with lots of crying
- Tiredness or exhaustion
- Anger
- Guilt – this can take many forms; guilt about feeling angry, about something you said or did not say, or not being able to stop your loved one dying

These feelings may not be there all the time and powerful feelings may appear unexpectedly. There are things you can try that may help.

Things you can try to help with bereavement, grief and loss.

Please Do:

- Try talking about your feelings to a friend, family member, health professional or counsellor – you can also contact the confidential employee assistance service – Validium. (Available 24/7 on 0800 358 4858).
- Look at tips on how to improve your chances of getting to sleep and quality of sleep if this is something you're struggling with.
- Consider peer support, where people use their experiences to help each other.
- Listen to free mental wellbeing audio guides from the NHS or free apps like Happier

Please Don't:

- Try to do everything at once – set small targets that you can easily achieve.
- Focus on the things you cannot change – focus your time and energy into looking after yourself and those around you.
- Tell yourself that you're alone – most people feel grief after a loss and support is available.
- Use alcohol, cigarettes, gambling or drugs to relieve grief - these are not healthy coping strategies and can put more strain on your mental health

Please remember, we're all different. We all react to loss in different ways. There's no right or wrong way to grieve. Just try to do what feels right for you.

We all have a duty to **CARE** for ourselves and others.



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Tips for sleeping during grieving.

- Avoid self-medication and alcohol. These only provide a temporary escape. As well as other serious side effects, they can disrupt patterns of sleep.
- Use sleeping aids only as prescribed by your doctor and only as a temporary way to break the cycle of sleeplessness.
- Try conditioning yourself to fall asleep to guided imagery, using pre-recorded audio programs with soothing music and voiceovers.
- Avoid going to bed either hungry or straight after a heavy meal.
- Drink a cup of warm water at bedtime.
- If your partner is the one who died, sometimes sleeping on their side of the bed can help provide comfort.
- Sleep with something warm, like a heat pad.
- Wind down by reading, taking a relaxing bath or having a warm shower before bed.
- Put on a night light if it provides comfort, but keep your bedroom cool, quiet and as dark as possible.
- Try to maintain a consistent sleep-wake cycle. Stick to a regular routine.
- Avoid naps lasting longer than 30 minutes, especially after 3pm.
- Cue your body to slow down and relax by preparing for bed the same way each night and go to bed when you are sleepy.
- You could try to follow a relaxation routine; performing deep breathing or backwards counting exercises in bed can help.
- Listen to music that soothes your soul and decreases tension.
- Visualize being in your favourite place.

Discuss in your teams:

- Are you having to deal with a bereavement of a loved one? Do you know someone in your team who is?
- Could you or someone you know benefit from some of the tips above?
- How can your team support your colleagues who have suffered recent bereavement? Can you set up a support group?
- Think about and discuss all of the things that your team can do and how we can all care for each other.