

# Coping with “Bad Days” After A Significant Loss

## Objective

To increase your ability to cope with difficult days after a significant loss.

## What to Know

After the initial shock of a significant loss and the first flood of support ebbs, you may feel the world has gone on without you as well as without the person you have lost. Most people report that some days are not so bad, and other days—even years later—a grief storm arrives. These difficult days are most likely to happen on anniversaries, birthdays, and holidays, although they may sometimes come without any apparent reason.

Some people can just accept the fact there will be difficult days after a loss, and they just have to get through these days the best they can. However, if you dread these days or feel that they are so difficult you can barely function, it can help if you prepare for them in advance.

Here are some ideas that can help you prepare for difficult days and accept them as part of the grieving and healing process.

- **Make a comfort kit.** Place things that comfort you in a special box and put it in a location where you can easily find it. You might put in candles, favorite bath oils, art supplies . . . whatever brings you comfort. This is an act of self-love, and you will feel that when you pull it out to use.
- **Create lists.**
  - A playlist of music that lifts you up. No poignant songs about loss; instead, choose songs that are as cheerful as you can stand.
  - People you feel comfortable reaching out to for support so you do not fall into the “nobody cares about me” pit.
  - Ways to get yourself moving. You might go for a walk, dance, practice yoga, or garden. Identify what it will take to engage in physical activity.
  - Feel-good resources, which might include movies that make you laugh, books that inspire you, food that brings you comfort, visits with children or animals, and so forth.
  - Places in nature you love to go. Whether you take a vigorous hike or sit and listen to the birds, nature is healing.
  - Words or affirmations. This might include statements like, “It’s ok to feel sad,” “This will not last forever,” “You can get through this,” “You are so strong,” “It’s ok to have a bad day,” and “You don’t have to fake it.”
  - Places to go. A weekend visiting a friend, a day playing tourist in your hometown, or taking a larger trip all move you out of your daily routine and thought patterns. You are likely to come home refreshed and less vulnerable to a grief attack.

- **Keep a gratitude journal.** List ten things you are grateful for every day. Then, when you are having a difficult day, you can pick up your journal to remind yourself there are so many good things in your life that balance out the grief.
- **Participate in a grief group or online forum.** When the bad days come, you will have a group of people who understand and support you in a deep way.
- **Reach out for help.** If difficult days come too often, grief is negatively impacting your relationships or work, or if you start to wish for your own death, seek professional help.

## What to Do

Use the suggestions above to make a plan for coping with difficult days.

What belongs in your comfort kit?

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Where will you store it? \_\_\_\_\_

Choose three of the lists mentioned above that you would like to make.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Summarize your plan for your next difficult day. Be creative.

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## Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

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