

Hope for Healing



Tools

Coping Strategies That Work

In his book *Waking the Tiger*, Peter Levine says that the painful symptoms of grief "stem from the frozen residue of energy that has not been resolved and discharged; this residue remains trapped in the nervous system and can wreak havoc on our bodies." While grief cannot be truly avoided, there are ways to release this painful energy and find relief. Below are some tools that have been scientifically shown to decrease pain and elevate mood. Healing from your grief will take time—a lot of time—but grieving individuals that engage in these positive coping strategies tend to heal more quickly and effectively, as well as learning how to cope with all the other challenges that life throws their way.

Art Therapy

You don't need to be an artist to create art from the soul. In fact, there is an advantage to approaching creative expression with a beginner's mind. The loss of a loved one and other struggles in our lives create natural opportunities for deeper contemplative exploration, and what we create through art can be a source of amazing insight and healing. Art can make the invisible (such as painful emotions and experiences) visible through external expression. Metaphorical language and story can emerge, giving voice to that which is often difficult to express.

Art making engages the whole brain and can stimulate integration of cognitive, feeling and sensory processes. Because art and emotions are closely linked,

art-making can help to positively alter your mood. Energy and vitality can be increased by a visible expression of suppressed thoughts and memories. It provides an experience of relaxation, reducing stress, anxiety and worry. Art therapy offers a hands-on, active, fun, and productive form of therapy.

To get started, consider a variety of media, including watercolor, tempera (poster paint), acrylics, chalks, crayons, colored pencils, finger paints, and clay. Find the medium that you find most satisfying. Don't worry about composition and the finished product. In art therapy, the process is the product. You may choose to put on soothing music while you create. Enjoy the process and consider giving your finished product a name.

Bereavement Services Available:

- *Individual grief counseling*
- *Mending Hearts grief support group:: open to the community. Please call the number below for current schedule*
- *Educational resources and referrals to groups in your area available upon request.*

Contact:

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"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly: what is essential is invisible to the naked eye."

- The Little Prince



Journaling

Do you sometimes feel all jumbled up in side, unsure of what you want or feel? Or like you're in the middle of a tornado with thoughts and emotions whirling round and round your head? Grabbing ahold of each of these thoughts and emotions as they fly by and putting them down on solid paper can decrease the dizziness and bring relief. The process goes beyond just keeping a diary or record of daily events—it's about exploring your feelings and thoughts about what is going on in your life and thus getting better in touch with your internal world.

There is increasing evidence to support the notion that journaling has a positive impact on both emotional and physical well-being. It is a remarkable tool for exploring one's intuitions and tapping into one's natural wisdom. Psychologists observe that journaling uses both the right (creative and intuitive) and left (analytical and rational) hemispheres of the brain, thereby supporting a person's natural way of learning and processing information.

It is difficult for some people to express their values and beliefs in normal conversation. And those who can express themselves openly may have difficulty finding someone to listen time and time again. A journal is a place to vent when faced with the overwhelming experience of grief and loss. Writing about anger, sadness and other painful emotions helps to release the intensity of these feelings. Through journaling, you will find that you are better able to clarify your thoughts and feelings, solve problems more effectively, reduce the pain of grief, and change negative beliefs into more life-giving opportunities for the future.

Discover the best time and location for

journaling, a private, quiet place where interruptions are unlikely. Go outdoors and near water, if possible. Write about what is happening in your life and how you feel about it. Include your hopes, fears, dreams, and failures. Be honest and the lessons will come.

Through your writing you'll discover that your journal is an all-accepting, nonjudgmental friend. And she may provide the cheapest therapy you will ever get.



“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, confusion into clarity. It turns problems into gifts, failures into success, the unexpected into perfect timing, and mistakes into important events. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates vision for tomorrow.”
- Melodie Beattie

Meditation/Breathing

Meditation is practical and easy to learn. You don't have to go to some strange place or put on different clothes to do it. And you certainly don't have to pay a fee or join a group or renounce your religion. Meditation can be done while sitting comfortably, walking, dancing, painting, listening to music, stretching, practicing yoga, taking a bath, spending time in

nature, reading, praying, or whatever else brings rest to your mind and body.

When we speak of respiration, we literally are saying to take in spirit. The word “meditation” comes from “medi,” the same Sanskrit and Greek root that is the origin of our word “medicine.” “Medi” means “to take the measure of” and “to care for.” The ancients believed that the mingling of breaths, as they called it, was a critical physical and spiritual tool in stabilizing and directing the underlying energy of the body and the mind.

Modern medicine and extensive scientific literature show numerous mental, emotional, and physical benefits of regular meditation and regulation of breath. It has been shown to rebalance the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which controls reactions to stress and regulates many body processes, including digestion, blood pressure, the immune system, mood and emotions, sexuality, and energy storage and expenditure.

Studies involving PET scans and MRIs clearly show that meditation quiets the portions of our brain associated with fear, anxiety, and unpleasant thoughts while engaging portions that are intimately connected with happy thoughts and good feelings. It helps us gain perspective on thoughts and ways of thinking that agitate and depress us, while producing a relaxed, moment-to-moment awareness that allows change to happen. Overall, meditation and regulation of breath can bring restoration of physical, mental, and emotional energy and can be a powerful technique to nourish the courage and persistence you will need as you make the journey through and beyond grief.