

HOW TO GET THROUGH THE FIRST WEEKS AND MONTHS AFTER A DEATH

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"Firsts" are hard when grieving. The first hour, days and weeks are times of mixed emotions. Time tends to move at odd speeds, varying from fast to slow. The first month, the first season change and the first year are all significant events. Being alert to these markers can help you prepare and endure through your growing/grieving process.

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1. **Take one day at a time:** Your body, mind and spirit are totally consumed with grief. Focus on one day at a time and only what is in that day. Tomorrow will come soon enough.
2. **Drop the feeling of "normal":** Nothing is going to be normal for some time to come. The first few weeks will be a rush of people, emotions and tasks. The next weeks will be sorting through belongings, thoughts and feelings. Months down the road glimmers of "normal" return.
3. **Do only one thing at a time:** Focus on one task, one person, one thing at a time. Your ability to concentrate is low when you are grieving. Focusing on one thing allows you to get that task done, and keep your mind busy.
4. **Brace yourself for many losses:** A death is the loss of a person but it can start a domino effect of other losses. Personal possessions are divided up between relatives or given away – a loss. A home might be sold – another loss. Don't be disturbed if one loss seems to escalate until you feel overwhelmed.
5. **Tell people what you need:** Friends and family will not know how to help you or relate to you unless you are specific about your wants and needs. Tell others what you need. Ask for help. Then congratulate yourself when you do.
6. **Remember to eat:** Grieving affects the mind in many ways. You might not be hungry, you may forget to eat, but you need to eat to keep your strength. Grieving takes a lot of energy.
7. **Sleep when you can:** Your sleep will most likely be affected because of your loss. Some people can only sleep in snatches and others cannot sleep at all. We need sleep to function mentally and physically. Take a nap if you are tired – especially if you can't sleep at night. Try sleeping in a different place in the house if you can't sleep in your bed. See a doctor if sleeplessness persists.
8. **Crying is okay:** Let the tears flow either when you are alone or in public. Crying is a natural outlet of grief. Do not apologize.
9. **Exercise every day:** Exercising will help you deal with the multiple emotions that are rippling through your mind and body. It will also help you sleep better at night. If possible, pick the same time every day to exercise. A friend might help motivate you and keep you on an exercise schedule. Often, after only a few days in an exercise routine, you will realize you feel better.
10. **Seek support early:** The first days after a loss will be busy. The following weeks and months will be when you have the most time to think. Get support during this time through friends, family or a grief therapist. You don't have to walk along this grief path alone.
11. **Lean on your faith:** Remember to touch base with your source of spirituality. It will bring comfort, strength and internal wisdom. If you have no belief system to help you through this rugged time, get in touch with nature. Perhaps this would be an appropriate time to reach out and explore new areas of thought or seek out others who hurt in the same way.