



HOW TO FIND PEACE IN SEASONS OF GRIEF

FIELD GUIDE

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SPIRITUAL FIRST AID™

Spiritual First Aid
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INTRODUCTION

For those who have suffered loss, navigating through life can feel overwhelmingly isolating.

However, it's important to recognize that even if you're not currently experiencing personal loss, you likely know someone who is grappling with grief. Symptoms of grief show up differently in different individuals, with the most common reactions including shock, disbelief, denial, anxiety, distress, anger, periods of sadness, problems sleeping, and loss of appetite.

When work, family obligations, home management, and social gatherings demand our attention, we can naturally be tempted to push our grief to the back burner. Yet it continues to simmer there, impacting our emotional health and relationships.

Tragedy often strikes when we least expect it, and working through the process of grieving loss is difficult. However, there are healthy ways to work through grief and seek the authentic support of others along the way.



SURRENDER TO GAIN A GREATER SENSE OF CONTROL

God is not the author of suffering but the originator of love, grace, and mercy.

Scripture reminds us that we can trust God with our pain and suffering, especially our grief.

It may sound counterintuitive, but spiritual surrender allows us to experience the fullness of God as we face our situation head-on, releasing our tightly held lives to him.

When we let go of what is out of our control and leave it at the foot of the cross, we position ourselves to gain what we want and what we truly need: eternal hope (1 Thess. 4:13).

Through several studies, including one done after Hurricane Katrina, our team has found that those who engaged in spiritual surrender are more likely to view God positively and can release more control to Him.

Similarly, other researchers have shown that those who can surrender what they can't control—such as the death of a loved one—tend to fare better psychologically.

Based on our research and personal experiences, we've come to understand spiritual surrender as a paradoxical pathway to control.

Spiritual surrender helps us recognize what we have control over and what we don't.

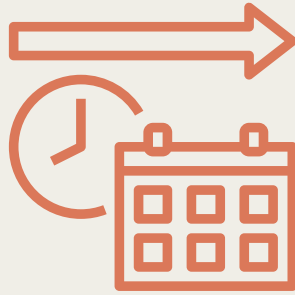
True spiritual surrender is far from passive; it is a willful act of trusting God.

Letting go of control unexpectedly places us in the hands of a God through whom all things are possible (Matthew 19:26), resigns us to what is, and reconciles us to loss.

— “ —————

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————— ” —



MAINTAIN TRADITIONS, BUT BE OPEN TO TRYING NEW ONES

Grief can shake our sense of “normalcy” and make us feel like we are on an emotional roller coaster.

It often interrupts life rhythms, especially around the holidays.

Where possible, keep the important traditions that brought meaning before your loss.

Maintaining established traditions can help us rediscover a sense of normalcy.

Because grief can disrupt our daily lives, trying to keep a routine can also be helpful.

Create some space in your day or days surrounding the holidays for the familiar.

Carving out calm amidst chaos can help buffer against the roller-coaster effect.

Seeking out familiar places, schedules, and people can be soothing and comforting.

Yet, we also encourage you to practice self-compassion, recognizing you may need to create new traditions.

For example, long-held traditions and rituals that once brought joy may now feel more like a reminder of what's been lost, bringing hurt to the forefront.

If changing traditions is what's needed to get you through a holiday season, know that's okay; you don't need to feel guilty.

New ways of being and new traditions can sometimes get us through life's toughest times.

They can help us regain our equilibrium.

As much as possible, try to stay active and do what is life-giving for you.



ACCEPT SUPPORT, INCLUDING FROM PROFESSIONALS

Accepting help from others can be challenging, but it's needed, especially during times of grief.

Study after study shows that social support is one of the biggest predictors of resilience after grief.

For example, our team's research has shown that positive spiritual support can aid in reducing stress, trauma, and anxiety amid personal loss.

Don't be afraid to contact loved ones and friends for extra support, especially around trying anniversaries.

This doesn't mean you have to rehash or relive events again.

Only share what you feel comfortable sharing.

If you don't want to talk about things, that's okay.

Just spending time and being with others can be healing in and of itself.

We encourage you to seek professional mental health care if needed.

Here are a few signs you would benefit from professional support:

- You can't shake the distressing thoughts and emotions brought on by grief after significant time has passed since your loss.
- The distress triggered by your grief starts to interfere with your everyday life.
- If others encourage you to seek professional help, this may also indicate that you should seek help.
- Finally, if you find yourself thinking about harming yourself, please call 988 or 911 for immediate assistance.



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REACH OUT AND HELP OTHERS (WHEN YOU CAN)

As you find yourself further along in your grief journey, when you feel you have the emotional and spiritual capacity needed, look for ways to help others.

Serving others can sometimes give us brief respite from our suffering as we care for those around us, and even small gestures can make a big difference.

Research has found assisting someone else in need is an effective way to find meaning and purpose in your struggle.

Dr. Daryl Van Tongeren, a social psychologist at Hope College, notes that helping others fosters a sense of meaning, purpose, and even feelings of happiness.

Similarly, Santa Clara University clinical psychologist Dr. Thomas Plante writes, "In a nutshell, if you want to cope better with stress, serve others. Stress management and resilience can be enhanced by connecting with others in need."

After we've suffered loss, caring for others helps us continue to be the people we were before grief struck.



EMBRACE THE TENSION BETWEEN GRIEF AND GRATITUDE

It is still possible to cultivate a sense of gratitude amid the grief you've experienced.

We don't say this lightly, or to try and minimize what those who've lost a loved one are going through.

You may feel tempted to try and avoid the difficult parts of your grief story.

However, we would encourage you to look for ways to remember and honor your whole story, including the ups and downs.

There is not one "right" way to honor your grief experience in its entirety.

This is not something to be rushed and takes time. Be patient with yourself and the recovery process.

But while lamenting, also take small steps toward learning to live in the tension between seemingly opposing emotions of grief and gratitude.

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Research indicates that cultivating gratitude amid grief can increase well-being, enhance relationships, and support growth and coping.

CONCLUSION

We hope we've encouraged you that experiencing peace is not impossible after grief. With time, intention, and support, you can find healing. Remember the truth that God's presence and grace are never-ending and always available—no matter what we go through.

As you journey through life's deepest valleys, may you be reminded of the profound message in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 that grief shall not have the final word:



*"Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"*

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

-1 Corinthians 15:55-57



Mental health is complex. Helping doesn't have to be.

BIBLICALLY-INFORMED

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

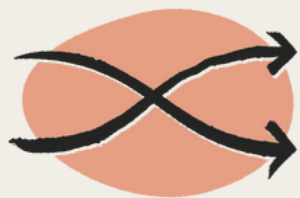
TRAUMA-INFORMED

Spiritual First Aid is a frontline peer-to-peer spiritual and emotional care intervention structured around the BLESS CPR framework.

When a friend approaches you with a crisis, do you experience...

- Uncertainty in what to say
- Missing signs of emotional struggles
- Personal burnout
- Hesitation in crucial moments
- Misinterpreting situations as trauma
- Compassion fatigue

In a world where mental health complexities can be overwhelming, Spiritual First Aid takes the guesswork out of spiritual and emotional care.



FLEXIBLE FORMATS

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ALL-INCLUSIVE

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HANDS-ON

Gain practical helping skills through activities and role-play simulations.