

Living with Loss

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I still pick up the phone and dial your number, the one number I have dialed everyday for the last 2 months. It rings until the voicemail opens; the entire process takes on an agonizing slowness. Today, I disconnect the ghost call after your voice fades into the beep. On the bad days when I miss you too much to care about realities: I leave a message. I cannot draw proper lines between habit and reality; death has brought on a permanent sense of blur. It's not hard to embrace the emptiness you left behind. The difficulty begins at trying to carry on, for the rest of my life, without dialing your number and waiting for your voice on the other end. How can someone who showed me how to make my world be gone from it?

At one point or the other, we make peace with the inevitability of death: we learn to accept our mortality. But whenever we think of losing those we love, the path to acceptance is riddled with fear. The fear that becomes an

all-consuming grief when that thought of loss becomes a reality. The loss of a loved one and the grief that follows it comes with a permanence of its own. There is no way around it; we re-learn how to function in a changed world and a changed self.

Losing someone you love is an extremely painful and difficult phase of life. Whoever it may be, the death of a loved one means the loss of a constant pillar and years of companionship. Although this process cannot be made any less difficult, it is helpful to remember a few ways that can help one cope:

- Take each day at a time and let your day be taken up with work and plans.
- Try not to isolate yourself; spend time with friends/family.
- Being involved in artistic activities can be helpful in sorting through your emotional burden.
- Let yourself feel whatever you feel without embarrassment or judgment. Sadness, disbelief, loneliness and anger

are common emotions when dealing with grief.

- It may be helpful to seek support from those who have gone through similar experiences.

When it comes to dealing with friends or family members who have faced a tragedy it is necessary to understand that there are a few things one needs to remember:

- Be accommodating and supportive. Empathy is far more comforting than sympathy.
- Being a good listener is crucial; don't be critical of how people react to their loss.
- Keep in mind that no one will respond to the death of a loved one in the same way. Avoid telling those who are grieving how they should feel or what they should do.

The thing about grief is that the old adage is true: Time heals all wounds. There is always a set of unspoken rules on how one should feel and behave in the face of mourning. One may find it easier to remember that how we deal with our tragedies does not need to be bound by societal definitions.



Reuniting with an old friend

SHREYOSI ENDOW

Whether it's by mere chance that you run into each other on the streets or a well-planned hangout that brings you together after years, reuniting with an old friend can be heart-warming as much as it can turn into a total disaster. Let's look at some of the various aspects of doing so.

What to expect

You need to brace yourself for any changes in your friend's character if you two haven't talked in years. This is mainly applicable if you were friends during school, and are meeting up years later when you are both adults. It is understandable if your twenty-one year old friend does not like the things they liked when they were thirteen. In fact, your choices must have changed as well and your friend might be having a tough time coping with that too.

Your friend's response in seeing you after all this time might not be the same as yours. You could be overly delighted, whereas to the other person, it might be like meeting a mere acquaintance. This leads to heartbreak and misunderstandings so be prepared for that.

Also, just because you were the only friend your

friend had when you went to school together, doesn't mean the scenario hasn't changed in the meantime. While it is fair to want to spend as much time as you can together, it is equally important to give your friend enough space for his or her new friends as well.

What to do

Paying a visit to a place that is brimful with memories of your friendship potentially ensures a good time. If you were school friends, you could visit your school and your teachers. If you were neighbours, go back to the neighbourhood and see what has become of it. If you had a special place you would always visit together, that should be at the top of your list. Or you could just choose a cosy restaurant where you could sit and talk for hours.

You could also arrange a sleepover at one of your houses and watch movies or listen to music albums that were released when you used to be friends or just catch-up with each other's lives and share the stories that you had bottled up all this time.

What not to do

Firstly, recall what it was that led to this gap in communication or this break in your friendship in the first

place. If it was something like one of you moving to a different town, or shifting schools, then you're probably off to a nostalgic and emotional start. However, if it was a feud, then it is probably better to avoid talking about the things that led to the feud or not bring that topic up at all.

In my experience, hangouts involving childhood friends and new friends lead to a lot of awkward silences punctuated with boring small talk, unless your friends are super-friendly; then you'll have the best of both worlds.

Now, it's all fun bringing up embarrassing and hilarious memories that you shared when you were much younger but there's a fine line you wouldn't want to cross. Leave out things that could embarrass your friend in conversations with his or her new friends. You wouldn't want someone to embarrass you to an extent that you cannot go out in public anymore, would you? I don't think so.

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