Healthy Ways to Process Grief and Move Forward

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ADHD and Emotions

The grieving process brings some predictable symptoms, like anger, sadness, emptiness and anxiety. However, people with ADHD tend to process and express emotions a bit differently, and that can bring challenges, especially in children. Unfortunately, grief is a part of life that's impossible to escape, but luckily, there are ways to help those with ADHD handle it in healthy and constructive ways.

Reacting to a Sad Event with ADHD

In order to offer the best help and support you can, it's important to understand how ADHD affects grief:

- **Emotions can be unpredictable**. People with ADHD often feel emotions intensely, and they may react strongly in ways that surprise or concern you. Some turn inward, while others will act out. It can be difficult for parents or spouses to walk the fine line between allowing healthy physical expression and indulging poor or hurtful behavior.
- **Hyper focus can lead to problems**. The ADHD phenomenon known as hyper focus (deep and intense concentration) can be problematic when sad emotions are at play. It's normal to feel sadness and anger, but keep a close eye on a growing sense of depression and desperation. You'll need to acknowledge the turn quickly, and redirect the emotions toward a more positive end before they spin out of control.
- **Loss can be very isolating**. Those with ADHD often experience a pronounced feeling of desolation with the loss of someone or something close to them. When a key figure leaves, dies or falls ill, an important source of dependence and support is lost, which can add a sense of fear, loneliness, and hopelessness to the grief.

Dealing with ADHD and Emotions

It's impossible to plan for every eventuality after a sad event, but there are some helpful steps you can take to support an ADHD child or adult through the grieving process:

Prepare well. In the case of a death, you may plan to attend a funeral or memorial service, and that can be jarring and uncomfortable for a child with ADHD. The best approach is good communication and preparation before the day arrives.

Talk about social expectations and how best to communicate feelings at ceremonial events. Many ADHD children tend to feel a bit socially awkward in new situations, and they can have trouble calming and communicating their emotions. It can be helpful to discuss what they can expect to see, hear and feel, and a few good ways to interact with the people they will meet there.

Find ways to remember and celebrate. One of the healthiest ways to process grief and move on from loss is to reflect in positive ways. Of course, this can be easier said than done, especially when strong feelings of sadness

and loss are still filling the home.

Taking time to remember and celebrate a life encourages positive focus, bonding, and hopeful attitudes. Plan occasions to sit and talk together as a family or social group, so there’s a safe and supportive environment for an ADHD person to express and assimilate their grieving experience. Flip through a photo album, enjoy a memorable food or activity, or start the ball rolling with an honest account of your own feelings and memories.

Healing and recovery comes when you can acknowledge the full cycle of coping with loss: grieving is necessary, but you must also learn to appreciate how the person has enhanced your life. Those with ADHD can find it more difficult to reach this level of acceptance, but it’s an important goal that deserves your focus.