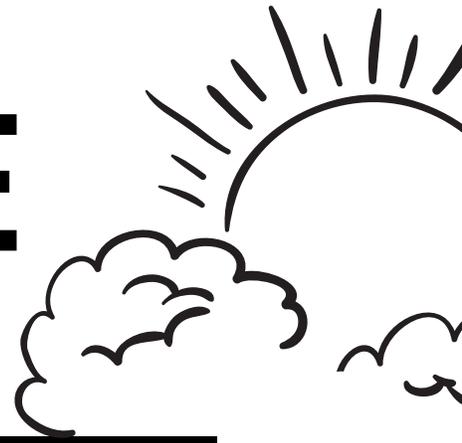


A SMALL SMILE

in times of grief

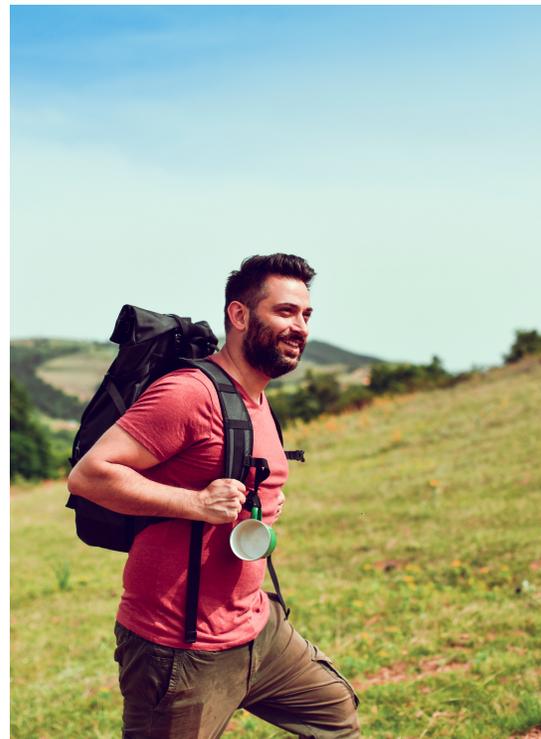


SMILING DURING GRIEF?

It may sound strange that we would want to talk about taking time to smile during grief, but stick with us to see what we mean.

Grief is such a complicated journey that takes us on quite an emotional rollercoaster. It can be exhausting and overwhelming at times. We may find ourselves longing for something to feel good, calm, and hopeful.

If you find yourself searching for those moments, try a small smile.



The first thing we want to say is that smiling during grief is not meant to cure or cover anything up. If we have these intentions, our smile will not have the intended affects we are looking for.

The purpose of smiling in these times is to help feed both our body and mind in gentle and natural ways.





A CHEMICAL RELEASE

Many mindfulness-focused studies show that smiling can help to release healthy brain chemicals like dopamine, serotonin, and endorphins. Here's the good news: these smiles do not have to be our all-out-happier-than-ever smiles. It can be a small smile of contentment, comfort, or peace. We can be more mindful of these moments and use these small smiles for a bit of a health boost.



FEEDING THE BODY + MIND

What happens in our brain and body when those "feel good" neurotransmitters are released? Research shows that they can help to relax us, lowering blood pressure and heart rate, as well as sending a calming affect to the brain.



It may almost feel like a breath of fresh air or a moment of calm. So remember to take the time to slow down and focus on the little things in life that may put a small smile on your face. Those moments are golden in this journey, and they allow us to slowly enhance our overall wellness.

It all starts with a mindful smile.



MINDFUL MOMENTS

Finding small moments to smile can feel tough some days, so we wanted to give you some ideas to help inspire these moments. Remember all it takes is a small smile and a mindful moment of gratitude, appreciation, love, or compassion to help us give a boost.

- Recall a special memory.
- Take a walk and appreciate the nature around you.
- Talk with family or friends.
- Appreciate that you have accomplished an important task.
- Watch a good movie or tv show.
- Read a feel-good book.
- Practice self-care.
- Carry out a random act of kindness.



- Appreciate an animal in your life.
- Mindfully sip your morning coffee or tea.
- Cook or bake something that fills your home with a cozy smell.
- Go to your favorite place and just be present there.
- Put your favorite picture in a place you see often.
- Get cozy and just spend a moment really enjoying the comfort.
- Write a letter of gratitude to someone important.
- Volunteer or find a way to give to something important to you.

It's ok if we don't want to feel happy or joyful - respect where you are. Mindful smiles may not always be filled with those intense emotions, they may just be light moments in the midst of our journey where we can pause, take a breath, and smile.