

How Do I Know I'm On The Path Toward Healing?

Change isn't always obvious; it is a process that takes place over time and with effort. Grief is different for everyone; it doesn't happen all at once or at the same rate of speed. Unless you're aware of the clues to recovery and their significance, your progress through grief may be so subtle and gradual that you may not notice it at all. Consider some of the following to signify you're on the path toward healing:

- Drive somewhere without crying the entire time.
- Get through a day without feeling tired all the time.
- Able to concentrate on a book, movie or television program.
- Get through a few hours or days nearly free of pain.
- Return to a daily routine.
- Eat, sleep and exercise normally again.
- Participate in a religious service without shedding tears.
- Accept invitations.
- Listen to music without getting emotional.
- Be aware of the pain and suffering of others around you.
- Be more patient with yourself and with others.
- Notice others in a similar experience and realize, and accept, that loss is a common to all living beings.
- Reach out to another in a similar situation.
- Realize that sometimes the thoughtless comments of others stem from ignorance and not malice.
- Finding something to be thankful for.
- Being patient with yourself through and allowing grief attacks.
- Feel confident again.
- Accept things as they are without trying to recapture what they used to be.
- Think less about the past.
- Look forward to the day ahead of you.
- Reach out and embrace the future with less hesitation and fear.
- Catch yourself smiling and laughing again.
- Feel comfortable spending time alone.
- Remember your loved one less idealistically – less perfectly, with more human than saintly qualities.
- Review both pleasant and unpleasant memories without being overcome by them.
- Reinvest the time and energy once spent on your loved one in meaningful ways.
- Rearrange furniture, redecorate, paint walls, etc. without feeling guilty or disloyal.
- Explore new traditions, foods, places or things.
- Generally feel more in control of your emotions and less overwhelmed by them.
- Feel more free to choose when and how to grieve.
- Talk about your loss more easily and freely.
- Feel less preoccupied with yourself and your loss.
- Notice that time doesn't drag as much – weekends are not as long.
- Notice there are more good days and mood swings are not as frequent, long-lasting, wide.
- Make plans for the future.
- Make decisions.
- Discover interests and abilities in yourself that you had not known before or that you chose not to develop.
- Fill some of the roles once filled by your loved one or find others who can fill them.

NOTE: Healing doesn't mean forgetting. Healing refers to integrating our loss and pain into our lives while becoming whole again by creating a new normal.