

11 Kinds of Therapy to Help You Grieve a Loss

By THERESE J. BORCHARD

Many readers are grieving loved ones, and the grief certainly contributes to their depression. A fantastic book I just came across is *Solace: Finding Your Way Through Grief and Learning to Live Again* by Roberta Temes, Ph.D., a noted psychotherapist and the author of "Living with an Empty Chair" and "The Tapping Cure." I have reprinted with permission of her publisher 11 different kinds of therapies and activities to help you grieve a loss.

What can you do to feel better? Sometimes you need to take action. When you do something to relieve your feelings and to give yourself a sense of achievement, you are accomplishing your journey through bereavement. Here are some activities—and some behaviors you can do—that are therapeutic for you during your bereavement.

1. Work is therapy.

If you are lucky enough to have a job, return to it even if just on a part-time schedule. The structure of getting up and out, the obligation to greet fellow workers, and the need to keep yourself together for a requisite number of hours is good for you.

2. Socializing is therapy.

It's important for you to be among people. Lack of contact with friends and acquaintances is a predictor of difficulty in bereavement. There are probably folks who do not want to intrude in your life at this time and are deliberately staying away. If you are feeling isolated, then it's wise to get in touch with those folks who are being too polite. Set up a lunch date, a weekend walk, or a shopping trip. Adopt a new social policy and say "yes" whenever you are invited anywhere.

3. Organizing is therapy.

When life threatens to overwhelm you, it feels good to have control over something—even if that something is just a room, a desk drawer, a closet, or a shelf. Get yourself back under control by organizing one area of your home at a time. This is a good opportunity to figure out what to do with your loved one's belongings. Many people are helped when they bring all the loved one's items, objects, and clothes into one room.

4. Taking action is therapy.

This can be your time to take action. Maybe you want to inform people about health insurance issues that were an obstacle for you. Maybe you want to persuade your political representatives to advocate for legalization of a particular drug or treatment. Or, perhaps you'd like to create a place to meet with others who suffered a loss similar to yours. There are folks who begin websites, chat rooms, or organizations and foundations to highlight a cause that needs consideration.

5. Food is therapy.

Nourish your body properly and it will be good to you. Use mealtime as a social event and invite neighbors and friends to join you. Plan ahead so that you will have company at meals. Get together with others for Sunday brunch, for Wednesday dinner, or for a midweek lunch at a restaurant.

6. Planning is therapy.

Use a calendar to make your plans. Plan when you will go somewhere new. Plan when you will buy yourself a new outfit. Plan to learn to knit and decide when you'll go to the yarn store. Plan to go fishing and call a buddy who likes to fish. Or, learn how to frame a favorite photo and plan when you will venture to a craft shop or to an art supply store. Plan to repair something in your house and plan to go to Home Depot or to Lowe's or to your local hardware store. Planning activities for your future will help you reach that future.

7. Religion is therapy.

There are many useful aspects of religion for the bereaved. There's the joining of voices in song, the praying, the person of authority telling you that you will be helped, the regularity of meeting times, the social component to the service, and the comforting words in religious readings. A believer will find solace in religion.

8. Writing is therapy.

Putting your thoughts and your feelings into words will help you. Writer Sherri Mandell says that daily writing helped her get through that first terrible year after her son was killed. She remembers, "I would just write and cry and write and cry. It was my therapy."

9. Art is therapy.

If you are interested in expressing yourself artistically, you are in good company. Some mourners do not speak in words but express their feelings in creative ways by painting, sculpting, writing poetry, writing songs, essays, plays, and more. You don't have to be an accomplished artist or poet. You simply need to sit down and express your feelings. Novices and professional artists alike find artistic expression during bereavement therapeutic.

10. Learning is therapy.

There is a reciprocal relationship between competence and a good adjustment to the loss of a loved one. Take a one-day class or a full-term class. Attend a one-hour lecture or a summer school session. Learn how to do a magic trick or learn how to grow orchids. Learn, learn, learn.

11. Reading is therapy.

Reading can be your great escape to other lands and to other centuries. Novels may intrigue you and take your mind away from sadness. Memoirs may engage you in someone else's life. Mysteries may compel you to use your brain to ponder a dilemma belong to someone else, not you—a welcome relief.

Want to learn more?

Check out the book on Amazon.com: [*Solace: Finding Your Way Through Grief and Learning to Live Again*](#) by Roberta Temes, Ph.D.