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Mourning over a child's death ^[1]

Dear Alice,

My oldest daughter died in a motor vehicle accident seven months ago. I have a husband and three other daughters. I am very depressed. Some days I think I won't make it. Some days I don't want to. I know that my life has been changed forever, but what can I do to help ease the pain — and to help me "move on" with my life?

J

Answer

Dear J,

What you describe, a feeling of having trouble "moving on," is a common and understandable reaction to grief. Losing a son or daughter is amongst the most difficult life events a parent can experience. Although each person has a different way of dealing with loss, your husband and daughters are likely to be experiencing many of the same feelings you are. It may seem to you that your husband and daughters have plenty of pain themselves and you don't want to burden them. Or perhaps you believe they are already coping well, and feel ashamed that you are still grieving so intensely. It's a safe bet that they, too, may need to express their sadness, anger, fears, and needs. Finding time to share your feelings together may offer each of you an opportunity to feel connected, cared for, and heard.

You may also want to find some other ways of working through the feelings you are experiencing. Many people find keeping a journal helpful. You can "talk to yourself" and even look back over time to see how your feelings have changed. You may also want to write letters to your daughter who passed away. Although she won't actually get them, the letters can be a way to sort through your own hopes, dreams, frustrations, and, ultimately, your new life without her.

Finding support in other people is really important, too. You could talk with a clergy member if you are involved in a religious or spiritual community. Your family health care provider can lend an ear and can also help you to find a counselor. Many organizations run support groups where you would have the opportunity to share your experiences with other men and women who have recently had a loss. Two to try are:

[The Compassionate Friends' Grief Support](#) [2]

[GriefNet.org](#) [3]

This process is not an easy one, but, over time, you will start to develop a new sense of pleasure in life. Allow yourself the time you need to grieve, think, and cry. Although your daughter is no longer with you physically, your memories of her will always be yours to enjoy and share.

Alice!

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