

## Helping Parents Cope with Losing a Spouse

What can you do to help your parent through his or her grief when a spouse dies? This is one of the major losses in life, but there are things you can do to help.

**Acceptance**--Be accepting and supportive of the new person your parent becomes in the wake of this devastating loss. Support him or her in new ventures and new friendships. Your parent must find a new way to live, and build a new life for himself or herself.

**Decisions**--Let your parent decide when and how to dispose of the deceased's clothing and personal items. Some may not be ready to do this right away. Others may want to get it over with almost as soon as they get home from the funeral.

**Family Traditions**--Let your family traditions change and evolve to fit your family's new structure. Don't force things that don't work without the deceased, or that are exceptionally painful without him or her.

**Independence**--Help your parent be independent. Teach him or her something new that the deceased used to do rather than taking it on yourself. This could be anything from balancing the checkbook to maintaining the car to cooking.

**Major Decisions**--Encourage your parent to delay making major decisions, such as selling a home or moving to a new part of the country--for at least one year after the death. Discourage other major financial decisions as well.

**Money**--Your parent may be tempted to loan money to family or friends. Help them resist this urge, at least until they have a better understanding of their new financial circumstances, whether it's for better or worse.

**New Life**--Encourage your parent to make a new life for himself or herself. Encourage him or her to make new friends, take up new activities, and find new focus in life.

**Talking**--Talk about the deceased parent. Tell stories, and bring up his or her name often. Talking about the person keeps the memories alive and helps the healing process.

**Telephone**--Call your parent frequently, and make sure they feel comfortable calling you more often. A surviving parent may become very dependent on his or her children for communication and companionship, at least in the short term.