HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING WITH THE LOSS OF AN ADULT CHILD

Treat yourself with kindness and patience. Grieving the loss of an adult child is likely to be a journey with many twists and turns. You may feel guilty or ask whether enough was done to help your child. You may be angry about the unfairness of your child’s death. Expect to have emotional ups and downs. This is a normal part of the grieving process.

Take care of your health. It is important to maintain your health and strength as you cope with this traumatic loss. For example, eat properly, get enough sleep and take any medicines your doctor may have prescribed.

Plan how to cope with special days. Special days such as birthdays and holidays may be difficult to manage. Discuss with your family what you might do to honor your adult child’s memory on these special days.

Share your feelings. Seek out the company of family members and friends who respect your feelings of sadness. Sharing memories of your adult child with others can be helpful.

Gather all your favorite photos. You may already have photos in albums or books, but some pictures may have special meaning. Have those pictures enlarged and framed or place them in a special album. If there is a photo you love that was taken by a friend or family member, ask him or her for a copy to keep.

Create a special remembrance of your adult child. A tribute to honor your adult child’s memory may be private or public. For example, you might light a special candle or plant a tree or garden in your child’s memory. For a more public tribute, consider working with a place of worship, park, foundation or other organization to create a special plaque or fund in your child’s memory.

Seek comfort from your spiritual beliefs. All faiths have ways of offering comfort during times of grief. Many parents find that support and practical help from people who share their faith also make a difference. Others get comfort from prayer and meditation. You may find it helpful to discuss your feelings about the loss of your adult child with a clergy person who has experience working with grieving parents.
Make room for your grief during the holidays. This may help you to feel less pressure and hopefully allow for moments of peace, solace or even joy that may come your way as you remember your adult child and spend time with your loved ones.

Keep a journal. Putting your thoughts and feelings down on paper may help you feel more in control. Writing down your memories of your adult child can be comforting and can serve as a record of your child’s life and legacy.

Get specialized help. Counseling is available to help you manage your feelings, understand the grief process and focus on the day-to-day tasks that need to be done. One of the goals of bereavement counseling is to help you find a way to cherish memories of your adult child while remaining open to new experiences in your life. At CancerCare, you can receive free counseling from oncology social workers who specialize in helping people affected by cancer.

Join a support group. Talking to other parents who have lost an adult child to cancer can help you feel less alone in your grief. Bereavement support groups led by professional social workers, such as those offered by CancerCare, offer a chance to share and learn from others.

CancerCare® Can Help
Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call 800-813-HOPE (4673). Facebook: facebook.com/cancercare Twitter: @cancercare

This fact sheet was made possible by AbbVie.