HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING WITH THE LOSS OF A PARENT:

Recognize the scope of your loss. Coping with the loss of a parent means learning to live without a person who has always been there for you, someone you have known for your whole life. Your parents knew you from the very beginning, carried knowledge of your past, and shared much of your life. The significance of losing a parent cannot be overstated.

Allow yourself to grieve. During your time of grief, you may feel a wide range of emotions, which can leave you feeling unsettled. You may also have intense feelings and be unsure how to handle them. All these emotions are normal and very much a part of the grieving process.

Give yourself time. Remember that you will grieve not only in your own way but also in your own time. It is important to be patient with yourself. Try to avoid feeling that you need to “get over” your feelings or “move on.” You need time to think about the past and cherish your memories.

Pay attention to your health. Grief often leaves people feeling physically and emotionally exhausted. It makes sense to eat regularly and rest when you need to. A visit to your family doctor is also a good idea. Your doctor can assist you in understanding the symptoms of grief. When you’re not feeling like yourself, reassurance from a doctor you trust can be very comforting.

Reach out to supportive people. Be specific about the kind of help you need. Family members, friends, neighbors, people in your community, people at your place of worship, and co-workers can all be supportive in different ways. Some people may be open to listening to you talk about your parent, while others may offer to help with practical tasks.
Plan for special days when you may need more support. Your parent’s birthday, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, and other holidays can be challenging. Think about how you want to honor your parent on these special days. Consider trying a new way to mark or observe the day. You may wish to include other family members or friends in your plans.

Look for extra support. Consider getting support from a grief counselor or oncology social worker, such as those at CancerCare. These professional are trained to help you understand your feelings and find additional ways to cope. Or look into support groups, which allow you to connect with other people who are coping with the loss of a parent. CancerCare offers free support groups to people who have lost a loved one to cancer.

Hold on to your memories. It may give you strength to focus on your parent’s most significant qualities, those that you will never forget. Consider that these qualities are part of the legacy left to you and everyone else your parent cared about. Holding on to this legacy is way to keep your mother or father close to you in your mind and heart.

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.

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