Managing Grief by Free Expressive Writing

The loss of a loved one is often painful. The resultant grief makes it hard to eat, sleep and leads to loss of interest in routine life, affecting behavior and judgment.

Some can feel agitated, some may feel like crying, some may want to withdraw from the world and others may struggle with feelings of sorrow, anger, guilt, despair, irritability or anxiety.

It is well known that disclosing your emotions by way of writing can boost your immune function and your mood and well-being. On the contrary, holding in strong feelings can increase blood pressure and heart rate.

One can write on a piece of paper, in his personal book, on the open website or keep it in the mind. One doesn't have to preserve the emotions and can throw away the writings.

In absence of deeply troubling situations, such as suicide or a violent death, which are best explored with the help of an experienced therapist, one can choose writing as a way to express the grief.

- Start writing for 15 to 30 minutes a day for 3 to 4 days.
- Continue up to a week if it is helping.
- Continue writing for 15 to 30 minutes once a week for a month.
- Writing has stronger effects when it extends for more number of days.
- Remember, writing about grief and loss can trigger strong emotions (one may cry or feel deeply upset).
- Several people find journal writing valuable and report feeling better afterward.
- Don't worry about grammar or sentence structure.
- Truly let go. Write down how you feel and why you feel that way.

(*Source: Harvard News Letter*)

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Autism Spectrum Disorder Makes Eye Contact Difficult with Others

People with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) find making eye contact with others in everyday situations challenging. Even though eye contact is an essential part of everyday interactions, scientists have been unable to examine the neurological bases of live social interaction involving eye contact in ASD due to the challenge of simultaneously scanning two people's brains.

A published study in the journal *PLOS ONE* stated that researchers used functional near-infrared spectroscopy, a noninvasive optical neuroimaging technique, to examine brain activity during brief social interactions between pairs of individuals, each consisting of a typical participant and one with ASD. They found that the dorsal parietal region of the brain contains specific brain regions linked to the social symptomatology of autism. The study revealed that these brain reactions to live face and eye contact might serve as a biomarker for the diagnosis of ASD and a test of the effectiveness of treatments for autism. The researchers further noticed that persons with ASD displayed considerably less dorsal parietal cortex activity during eye contact than participants without ASD. Additionally, the less activity in this area of the brain was seen, the more severe the overall social symptoms of ASD as determined by ADOS (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, 2nd Edition) scores.

Real eye-to-eye contact caused synchronized neural activity in these regions between normal people, while looking at a video face did not. The absence of this expected increase in neural connectivity in ASD is consistent with the challenges faced in social interactions. (*Source: https://theprint.in/health/study-reveals-why-those-with-autism-avoid-eye-contact/1208276/*)