

# How to Cope With the Loss of a Grandchild or Great-Grandchild



By Dr. Alejandra Vasquez, JD, CT a Certified Grief Counselor

When a grandchild or great-grandchild dies, it's not just their life you grieve but also all the hopes and dreams for their future. While the devastation will last for weeks or months following their death, the pain of losing them may last a lifetime.

As you navigate through your grieving journey these tips may help relieve stress and pain.

## 1. Breathe

Whether your grandchild lived near or far away, you can feel the pain of their loss on different levels. The loss of a grandchild represents a void in a grandparent's life that no one else can ever fill. You're left having to pick up the pieces trying to make sense of their untimely death while at the same time helping your own child through their loss. For the first few days following their death, remember just to breathe.

## 2. Get support

You are experiencing much pain and sorrow over your grandchild's death and your child is also mourning an even more significant loss to them - the death of their child. Many times a grandparent's grief is often overlooked. You may be suffering through grief without the acknowledgment or support of others. Find your own support group to help support you during this difficult time.

## 3. Acknowledge Grief

When you ignore the emotional pain of your loss and bury your grief, you're only prolonging its effect. The feelings and emotions that come with a devastating loss don't simply go away on their own. The more you wait to acknowledge your suffering, the more complicated your recovery will be. Allow yourself to grieve your loss and to accept the pain that's a part of your suffering.

## 4. Allow Grieving

Accepting their loss can remind yourself of how much it hurts that they've died. So you may consider blocking your feelings to avoid having to feel anything. Part of the natural grieving process allows for a feeling of numbness after such a significant loss. The stages of the grieving process will naturally unfold if you allow them to take place.

## 5. Self-care

When taking care of others, it may seem nearly impossible to find the time for some self-care. You'll want to be distracted with other things like taking care of your child's family. Busying yourself by taking on these responsibilities might make you feel as if you're useful and supportive. Carve out some time for a little self-care to avoid an emotional breakdown when least expected.

## 6. Read and Learn

For some, reading books on grief and how others have survived this type of loss helps them cope with their own experiences. You may find comfort in reading books on grief to help you sort through your thoughts and emotions.

### 7. Tears

The loss of your grandchild may be one of those times where you feel that you're the glue that needs to keep everything together. Releasing your tears is not only therapeutic for you, but it helps in the healing process of grief. Tears are not only cleansing, but after a good cry, you may gain a different perspective surrounding the death.

### 8. Competition

It's normal and natural to want to be there and support your child as they deal with this tremendous loss. Some parents don't know how to help their child who is grieving, so they end up taking on more responsibility than needed.

Examples:

- Stepping in to make the funeral arrangements
- Paying for the funeral
- Ordering the family flowers

Although you may only be trying to be helpful, take care that you aren't subconsciously trying to make up for your losses by going overboard and overstepping boundaries.

### 9. Finding Meaning

When someone you love dies, you may search for a deeper meaning to explain their loss. You may find yourself contemplating the meaning of life and death, and whether there's anything more to this life here on earth. Finding hope and peace after the loss of your grandchild will help you get through the many rough days and nights ahead.

### 10. Campaign

The tragedy of having lost your grandchild will never leave you and will make you wonder why something so senseless had to happen. For grandparents who have lost their grandchildren to avoidable tragedies or accidents, it helps to lend a voice to try and prevent the same thing from happening to others. Consider lending your voice and experience toward the prevention of certain tragedies that have personally affected you and your family.

### 11. Understand Grief

Because each relationship with a grandchild is unique, every grandparent's grief experience will be different. While some grandparents can express their pain through tears and verbal communication, others may internalize their grief without verbalizing their emotions. Remind yourself that everyone grieves differently. If it seems like some may care more than others, realise that they may be expressing their grief when no one's around. A strong family support system is imperative during this painful time in life.

### 12. Be Patient

Limit your expectations and be patient with yourself. Constant mourning, sadness, and grief, if not acknowledged, can cause strain on your physical and mental well-being. By getting away and letting yourself recharge, you benefit not only yourself but also those who depend on you. Consider going out to lunch with a friend once a week.

### 13. Keeping their Memory Alive

There are many different ideas to honour your grandchild after they've passed. Some people will make teddy bears and pillows out of clothing left behind. Others may choose to start a yearly event or tradition held in remembrance. Honouring the memory of your grandchild can aid in the grieving process and establish a legacy inspired by the person's remarkable life.

### 14. Let Hope Lead

Where there's light, there's hope. While you may feel the pain will never end, seek comfort in knowing that there's light at the end of the tunnel. Have patience and know that emotions will improve with time. Learning to appreciate every moment of every day. In time, your life will develop new meaning.

**National 24-Hour Helpline Number 1800 391 391**

Carmichael Centre, 4 North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7

Phone: 01-8732711: Website: [www.firstlight.ie](http://www.firstlight.ie): Charity No. CHY7716

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