

# THE ULTIMATE BALANCING ACT

## *Taking care of yourself after a child has died*

*“The key to keeping your balance is knowing when you have lost it.”—Anonymous*

To be honest, the problem with self-care is that it often feels like just one more thing you are supposed to do and don't have time or energy to. The end result is that you can feel even more overwhelmed! It may be easier to think of working on balancing your life. After a child dies, your world is shattered and you feel completely lost. It seems impossible to find any sense of balance when your whole reality is turned upside down. Nothing makes sense any more. Most days, you are just trying to find the strength to take a breath and take a step. Taking care of you can start with very simple goals. You can begin by taking a deep breath and one small step forward.

- Begin each day with one small but meaningful affirmation. Repeat it as many times as you can. “I am a good person.” “I can live one minute at a time.” “I can love and am loved.”
- It is okay and important to take a moment for yourself each day. This is not selfish. Keep a journal, laugh, take a long shower, listen to music.
- Try something new each week. Visit a gallery, feed some ducks, take up a sport, try a free art class.
- Find time to play and forget. Even for a moment, it is healing to laugh and find joy in life.
- Go to the park with your children, see a funny movie, read a joke book, play a game.
- Create some space for movement. Moving our bodies is crucial to nurturing ourselves; it produces endorphins and positive thoughts. Take a short walk, clean a closet, take an exercise class, just move.
- Establish a community of trusting friends. Reach out to others who can support you with honesty, warmth and love. Look for those who will truly listen and who are very slow to offer advice or tell you what you “should” do.
- Remind yourself to eat well (and indulge in a dessert on occasion!). Maintain your routine and sleep regularly.

Surprisingly enough, the airline companies had it right all along: “When in need of oxygen, first put the mask on yourself and then help your children or others.” We cannot begin to rebuild our lives, parent our children, support our partners, or be productive at work until we take care of ourselves first. Seek balance in small ways and slowly, but surely, the process of healing your pain will happen.

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