**Next Steps**

It may be helpful to have another family member or close friend go with you to the funeral home. You may wish to consider the following while planning the funeral arrangements and obituary:

**Planning the Obituary**
- Name of your loved one (full name; include “nick name” or other names the person might have used).
- Date and place of your loved one’s birth.
- Occupation.
- Parents’ names; mother’s maiden name, if appropriate.
- List of church, temple or mosque, clubs, and other organizations in which membership was held.

**Making Funeral Arrangements**
- Social Security number.
- If a veteran, proof of military service.
- List of relatives, friends, neighbors and co-workers.
- A list of individuals who might be available as pallbearers and/or individuals who may speak about your loved one at the service.
- You may also wish to bring the clothing your loved one will be buried in.
- The arrangements for food or a reception after the burial service.

**After you have made funeral arrangements...**
- Obtain three extra copies of the death certificate.
- Contact life insurance companies.
- Contact your local Social Security office if you are eligible for benefits.
- If you do not have an attorney, you can also contact your bank concerning accounts.
- Notify creditors and credit card companies.

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**Bereavement Support**

**BAYSTATE MEDICAL CENTER**

(413) 794-2899

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**When you have returned home, you may wish to...**

- Contact other family members and close friends.
- If there are children in the family, consider their grieving process.
- Discuss the choice of a funeral home with close family and friends.
- Contact your minister, priest, rabbi, or Imam (if you have one) who will assist you with funeral arrangements.
- Notify all appropriate workplaces.
- Notify the school that children are attending.
- Contact an attorney, who will be able to assist you with any legal issues.
- Have a relative or friend answer the phone or help with phone calls and also keep a list of all phone calls, flowers, and food donations.
- Determine if you would like donations made to an organization or charity in memory of your loved one.
**Responding to Grief**

You will need time to adjust and to deal with the many emotions that will be part of your healing process. This process is not an easy one and will take time.

**In response to your grief, you may:**

- Feel tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest.
- Have an empty feeling in your stomach and lose your appetite.
- Feel guilty or angry over things that happened or didn't happen in the relationship with your loved one.
- Feel restless and look for activity but find it difficult to concentrate.
- Feel as though the loss isn't real, that it didn't actually happen.
- Sense your loved one's presence, like finding yourself expecting the person to walk in the door, hearing a voice, or seeing a loved one's face.
- Wander aimlessly, be forgetful, or be unable to finish tasks you've started to do.
- Have difficulty sleeping and dream of your loved one frequently.
- Assume mannerisms and traits of your loved one.
- Feel guilty or angry over things that happened or didn't happen in the relationship with your loved one.
- Feel as though you need to take care of other people who seem uncomfortable around you by politely not talking about your feelings of loss.
- Need to tell and retell the experience of your loved one's death and remember things about this person.
- Cry at unexpected times.
- Feel your mood change over the slightest things.

These are all natural and normal grief responses. It's important to cry and talk, and to reach out for help from family, friends or professionals whenever you feel you need help.

As you go through this process, it might be helpful to keep the following in mind:

**Caring**

Others may want to offer their support during this time; they may seem uneasy as they try to express their sympathy to you. Try to keep in mind that this is their way of showing you that they care and that they are there for you.

**Small Pleasures**

There is healing in the small pleasures of life. Take the time to experience things you took for granted before your loss. Allow yourself a special meal while watching a favorite movie. Follow what feels like healing to you and what connects you to the people and things you love.

**Setting Goals**

For awhile, it may seem that much of life is without purpose or meaning. You will find yourself taking one day at a time as part of your healing journey. At some point, it may be helpful to set some short-range plans such as getting some exercise or having lunch with a friend. At first, you may notice that you may not enjoy your favorite things as much as you used to, but that is normal.

As time passes, you will be able to set some long-range goals to give your future some purpose and structure. Don't be afraid to ask for professional guidance to help in your planning process. You may also want to seek trusted help in managing your finances and daily household management. Getting back into a routine is very stabilizing and creates structure for your day-to-day life.

**Stepping Back as We Step Forward**

There will be periods of “ups and downs” for you. Sometimes, after a period of feeling good, the sadness returns. You may even experience periods of anger and helplessness. Do not be alarmed or discouraged if these feelings come and go. You will need time to process your grief, and only with time will everything become comfortable for you.

Anniversaries and holidays may bring up feelings of sadness and grief. Or you may feel particularly anxious about how to live through the holidays. You may want to celebrate differently than before. Remember to treat yourself with kindness and love and stay close to those who care about you.

**How your physician can help**

Sometimes, we need temporary medication to help us through the initial grieving process. Medications are designed to help initially, but generally are not intended for long-term use. Be careful with your use of alcohol. Alcohol is a depressant and can heighten feelings of sadness or loss. Please consult with your physician about medications and the use of alcohol and other stimulants.

**For More Information and Education**

Baystate Medical Center sponsors a monthly Bereavement Education and Support Group. If you have questions about grief or special funeral arrangements; need assistance with grieving children or older adults; or are looking for local bereavement support groups and counselors, please call the Bereavement Support Program at Baystate Medical Center at 794-2899.

The Bereavement Support Program at BMC is an interdisciplinary program providing support to bereaved persons of all backgrounds and information about grief, bereavement and loss, and short term grief counseling.