



WHAT NOT TO DO

Don't condemn yourself. It is natural to say, "If only I had called the doctor sooner," or "If I had only not said some of the things I said," or "If only I had known."

Most of us have such feelings of self-judgment and guilt after we have lost someone who was as close to us. Those nagging doubts and recriminations grow from any close relationship with another person. But no one can foresee all that may happen, and no one can go through life doing everything possible to meet every possible turn and twist and change and shift. We all know we could have done some things better. To chastise ourselves by dwelling upon our natural, human actions does not make anything better; but it does slow up the process of getting our deep feelings back in balance. We cannot turn the clock back and do anything differently. We should try to look at ourselves now and then through the eyes of the one who has died, realizing that if consciousness survives it understands and forgives in a way that could not have been possible before.

Don't Drug Yourself: When a painful situation develops, it is not unusual for others to try to ease our pain by giving us pills, drugs, stimulants or tranquilizers. But such things only postpone the facing of our grief. They momentarily take the sharp edge off our feelings, leaving in exchange a dull ache for a longer period of time. This interference with the natural expression of anguish at the loss of a loved one is harmful. Unless the circumstances are most unusual, it is wise to resist the impulse to ease discomfort in that way.

Don't Feel Sorry For Yourself: Of all emotions, self-pity leads the list in pure futility. You have seen people faced with despair who react by making mental lists of every possible bad thing that could ever happen to them or the world. They pile despair on despair.

It does no good. It makes you feel worse, and you already are unhappy enough. It distorts your thinking so that the good looks small and the bad looms menacingly large. When you catch yourself slipping into that kind of thinking, put the brakes on, for you are going down grade, and will have to work that much harder to bring yourself up again.

Don't Run Away: If some well-meaning person says, "You need a long trip. Just get away from it all." don't let yourself be fooled. The you that has been injured by acute loss is the same you that would go with you on the journey. The best place to face readjustment is where the readjustment must finally be made. There is a time and a place for rest and change, but there is no rest or change when you are running away from something you must squarely face. Face it, resolve it, and then you can truly find new sources of inner strength in change.

Don't Withdraw Yourself: Few persons are able to live like hermits, and those who can are not normal. We need friends and relatives to help us keep in contact with the world we live in. Those who withdraw and become emotional recluses are cutting off one of the best sources of strength and help in meeting the future. Sometimes a special effort is necessary before we can mingle with others, but it can be done through social or religious groups, and it helps to restore a healthy perspective to life.



Don't Pay Too Much Attention To What Others Say: We can assume that most people speak with good intentions, trying to be helpful. But they are bound by their own experience, and their experience may not apply to yours. Thus, they may say, "It must have been God's will" or "It is better this way." When you know that it is far from being "better this way".

At such times, it is hard to find the right thing to say, and in fumbling for words, many persons say ill-considered things. Make allowances for such statements, and try to understand that sympathetic feelings go with them even though the words distress you.

Don't Cross Bridges Until You Come To Them: You may be overcome with uncertainty and apprehension about the future. You may wonder what will become of you and others dependent upon you. Don't try to make important decisions while you are off balance. Don't anticipate problems. Wait a bit and take care of the immediate urgent tasks. Get your perspective, look at the things when you are calmer, and then determine your assets and liabilities. When you do come face to face with what must be done, you will find the necessary wisdom and strength. There is a solution to every problem. Often it is not a matter of deciding between right and wrong, but which of several right ways would be best for you. When you have made a decision, move ahead with confidence, and do not look back with regret.

Above all, Don't Underestimate Yourself: In the face of major adjustments, many persons fail to recognize their own powers. Each new experience can call forth new abilities and resources.

Do the best you can, and you will be able to say with others who have been through the same experience, "I don't know where the strength came from, but I am surprised at myself. I have done better than I ever expected I could do.