

STEPS TO SURVIVAL

1. **Recognize the loss:** For a while you are numb. It has happened—try not to avoid it.
2. **Be with the pain:** You're hurting. Admit it. To feel pain after loss is normal—proof that you are alive; proof that you are able to respond.
3. **You are not alone:** Loss is part of life—EVERYONE experiences it.
4. **You're a beautiful, worthwhile person:** You are much more than the emotional wound you are presently feeling.
5. **You will survive:** Believe that you will heal.
6. **Give yourself time to heal:** The greater the loss—the more time it will take.
7. **Healing has progressions and regressions:** Healing and growth is not a smooth upward progression, but full of ups and downs—dramatic leaps and depressing backslides.
8. **Tomorrow will come:** Your life has been full of positive experiences—they will return.
9. **Take good care of yourself:** Get plenty of rest. Stick to a schedule. Plan your days. Activity will give you a sense of order.
10. **Keep decision-making to a minimum:** Expect your judgment to be clouded for a while. You are going through change—don't add more just yet.
11. **Seek comforting:** Accept support from others—seek it. It's human and courageous.
12. **Surround yourself with living things:** A new plant—pet—bowl of fresh fruit.
13. **Re-affirm your beliefs:** Use your faith right now—explore it, lean on it—grow.
14. **Weekends and holidays are the worst:** Schedule activities you particularly enjoy.
15. **Suicide thoughts:** These may arise—they are a symptom of pain. If you feel they are getting out of control, seek help at once.
16. **Do your mourning now:** Allow yourself to be with your pain—it will pass sooner. Postponed grief can return to haunt you. Grief feelings will be expressed—one way or another—now or later.
17. **Be gentle with yourself:** You have suffered a disabling emotional wound—treat yourself with care.
18. **Let yourself heal completely:** Give yourself time. You are a convalescent right now. Don't jump into new things too quickly.
19. **Mementos:** If these are helpful to you, use them—BUT—if they bind you to a dead past, get rid of them. Before you say hello, you must say goodbye.
20. **Anticipate a positive outcome:** Pain is acceptable—it tells us we are hurting, but it is not a welcome long-term visitor.
21. **It's OK to feel depressed:** Crying is cleansing—a wonderful release. Be with these feelings for a while.
22. **It's OK to feel anger:** Everyone reacts at the loss of love. Channel it wisely and it will go away as you heal. Hit a pillow. Kick on a bed. Yell and scream when you are alone.
23. **Nutrition:** Good eating habits help the healing process.

24. **You're vulnerable:** Your resistance will be low—invite help from only those who are trustworthy.
25. **Beware of the rebound:** There's a hole. Be careful about rushing to fill it.
26. **Beware of addictive activities:** Alcohol, drugs and food are all diversions which can momentarily help us escape from pain. We can become addicts—and these never help us to really heal.
27. **Set a time limit on mourning:** Remaining distraught for a long time is no proof that you really loved. Real love is life supporting.
28. **Keep a journal:** Putting your thoughts and feelings on paper is a good way to get them out. You can also look back and see just how far you have come.
29. **Heal at your own pace:** Never compare yourself to another grieving person. Each of us have our own time clock.
30. **You will grow:** As you work through your sadness, you will learn that you can survive. The pain eventually lessens—healing does occur. You may begin to understand that change and separation are a natural part of living. You are a better person for having loved.
31. **Begin to look to the future:** Begin to experiment with new life styles—new ways of filling the day. They might even turn out to be fun.
32. **Give yourself praise:** You are a richer, deeper, wiser person.
33. **Be open:** Give yourself opportunities to meet new people, places, ideas, and experiences—but don't forget to build on the past. Don't throw out what has been worthwhile to you. Small changes at first are best.
34. **Begin to give of yourself:** Giving can bring you the greatest joy. It is healing.
35. **Expect relapses:** There will always be certain things that trigger sadness again. This is normal.
36. **Alone does not mean lonely:** Solitude can be creative, restful, and even fun. You can learn to enjoy it.
37. **Enjoy your freedom:** You are now in control. Make the most of your choices—you can even learn to take risks.
38. **Celebrate your survival:** LOSS=PAIN=GROWTH.

(STEPS TO SURVIVAL was developed at St. Petersburg Junior College, Pinellas County, Florida)

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