

RESILIENCE RX™

A free resource

INSOMNIA AFTER LOSS

*How good sleep
can help you
cope*

*Tips to regaining
restorative sleep*



RESILIENCE RX™

Self-care techniques

The science behind why they work and
how to implement them in everyday life



This free resource is designed to provide self-care techniques to support the bereaved with the understanding that the International Grief Institute is not engaged to render any type of psychological, legal, or any other kind of professional advice.



INTERNATIONAL GRIEF INSTITUTE, LLC
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“ Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace.

VICTOR HUGO

How grief affects sleep

Losing a loved one creates upheaval and disruption in every area of our life, and can lead to many sleepless nights. The prolonged fight or flight reaction, coupled with an inner dialogue of intrusive thoughts (rumination), all impact our ability to relax our body and quiet our mind come bedtime.

Juggling such emotional strains often leads to serial tossing and turning, sleep disruption and insomnia. In turn, the ensuing sleep deprivation magnifies our emotions and reduces our ability to cope with the upheaval, creating what feels like an unending circle of tumbling dominos.

How sleep disturbance affects us

Studies show that receiving less than 7 hours of sleep at night may increase our risk of diabetes, heart conditions, obesity, or anxiety. Further, people who suffer from untreated insomnia are 1.9 times more likely to become injured at work and 1.5 times more likely to become injured in general (Psychology Today).

Managing sleep disruption and insomnia by practicing good sleep hygiene, coupled with medical management when needed, can help restore a restful sleep pattern after loss, and lead to significant improvements in other distress symptoms (National Institutes of Health, 2008).

Benefits of good sleep hygiene

Healthy sleep habits are an essential part of caring for yourself, and can make a big difference in your quality of life. Studies show that good sleep helps you cope better in times of stress. It can also lower your blood pressure, improve your memory, help keep your immunity strong, and puts you in a better mood.

Known as good sleep hygiene, healthy bedtime habits can influence the body's circadian rhythms. Healthy daytime habits, including what you eat, drink, how much daylight and physical exercise you get, also play roles.

Sleep hygiene tips:

Try the following suggestions from the National Sleep Foundation to help you reestablish a restorative sleep pattern after losing someone you love.

- To help regulate your body's clock, stick to a sleep schedule of the same bedtime and wake time, even on weekends.
- Create a relaxing bedtime ritual, such as a warm bath or reading, to give your body time to wind down.
- Exercise early in the day. Vigorous exercise is best, but even light exercise is better than no exercise.
- A sleep environment between 60 and 67 degrees is ideal.
- If your partner snores, consider using a fan, earplugs, or white noise.
- Use comfortable pillows and bed linen.
- Consider moving around the bedroom furniture, repainting the bedroom walls, and purchasing new bed linen.
- Avoid bright light in the evening to keep your circadian rhythm in check.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, cigarettes, and heavy meals later in the day.
- Try wearing a sleep mask or weighted blanket across your feet to help reduce stimuli and calm your mind.

If you continue to struggle with sleepless nights after trying the tips above, cognitive behavioral therapy is one of the top suggestions for treating long-term sleep disruption. Speak to your doctor to learn more about this process.



A word about resilience

“ Life doesn’t get easier or more forgiving,
we get stronger and more resilient.

JAMAIS CASCIO

What is resilience?

Resilience is the ability to adapt to life difficulties—including loss of a loved one. Building resilience through strategies that support the brain, body, and emotions during difficult times can help reduce the damaging effects of grief.

The goal

The goal of Resilience Rx™ is to offer self-help techniques that trigger positive hormones—dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin—to help support you as you learn to move forward with your loved one in your heart.

How do you strengthen resilience?

The first step is to take good care of yourself. We can’t always predict loss and other stressors, but practicing self-help techniques that tend to our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs can help us to weather the storms.

There are multiple ways to trigger positive hormones. Use this Resilience Rx™ resource as one of your tools in your self-care toolbox to help lift your spirits and soothe your heart when mourning the loss of someone you love.



INVESTING IN COMMUNITY RESILIENCE