

Moving On: New Life and Love After the Death of a Spouse



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Spouses who are left behind when their wives or husbands of many years pass have untold changes and challenges to weather as they face a future, ostensibly, alone. But the human spirit has a tendency to survive, and even thrive in the face of adversity. While widows and widowers must do the hard work of facing the essential tasks of life bravely, it is heartening for them, as well as their families, to know they don't have to face these challenges on their own.

In all areas of life—spiritual, financial, psychological, and social—seniors facing life without their spouses can take advantage of assistance from community organizations and local programs designed to help them with unfamiliar, even painful life events.

One of the most compelling challenges seniors face, is how to tackle life on their own after years of being a part of a *special team*. Meaningful social interactions are important for anyone, and those “left behind” are no different. Finding ways to maintain a social life, then, is an important part of continuing to lead a satisfying and happy life.

Wonderful ways to keep connected are to: serve (volunteer in your community), exercise (gather with a group to keep healthy and active), join (socialize through your local church or other community organization), travel (an exciting way to distract yourself and discover new worlds!).

Many seniors will also consider seeking a new romantic partner. In general, widowers begin to date around the sixth month after a wife's death; widows start around the ninth month or later. While some spouses may feel guilty, thinking they are somehow betraying their lifelong deceased partner by seeking romance elsewhere, a geriatric psychologist once told me that the desire to remarry after the death of a spouse is a positive sign of a once happy, fulfilling marriage and the ultimate hope to create – and work towards – a similar type of relationship.

There is no right or wrong answer, and every situation is unique. There are many widows and widowers who never seek new relationships – intimate or otherwise – after the death of their spouse.

You can also expect varying opinions and reactions from family members. Some children completely support their widowed parent while others don't want to stare down the reality of a new partner for Mom or Dad and aren't shy about sharing their viewpoints.

There are a myriad of strategies for dealing with new relationships, and no plan is full-proof. But if it's the right move, your head and your heart will tell you so loudly, and congratulations on finding new life and new love!

Keeping the promise,



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