



pathways
through grief *storms pass by*

CAN humans die of broken hearts? According to researchers from Mayo Clinic, humans can die of broken hearts even though it is rare. Broken Heart Syndrome is diagnosed through EKGs, chest X-rays, and echocardiograms after a stressful event. Decreased functioning of the heart can be seen on tests even though there is no actual blockage.

A person may present at an ER with shortness of breath and chest pain due to stress chemicals

being dumped into the bloodstream. Patients may require hospitalization for a week or so, but the heart is not permanently damaged. People with Broken Heart Syndrome do recover to live productive lives.

After someone you love has died, you may have felt like your heart would break. So it is important to take care of yourself. Remember that, even with Broken Heart Syndrome, hearts usually heal, just as hearts heal after a loss.

“Sometimes I wish I were a little kid again; skinned knees are easier to fix than broken hearts.”

—Author unknown



GRIEF PATHWAY OUTLOOK

TERRAIN

Sharp curves,
narrow, falling rocks,
unmarked path,
steep grade

WEATHER

Cloudy, high winds,
80% chance of rain
with lightning

HEARTACHE INDEX:

High

TRAVEL TIPS:

- Friends and family may grieve and move on, and you may feel alone.
- It is a harsh reality to realize your loved one will never come back. Hang on—you can get through this!
- Self-care is extremely important. Consider a check-up by your doctor if you have not had a check-up for a while.
- Keep hydrated—drink plenty of water.
- Eat nutritious food and try to reestablish a sleep pattern.
- Gentle exercise, such as walking, can help maintain physical fitness and decrease depression.
- Talk to a close friend or relative about your loss. Telling your story over and over can be healing.

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A BUMPY RIDE

WHEN I boarded a plane in San Antonio to return to Kansas, the weather was gloomy with pouring rain. Our plane made it to Dallas-Fort Worth without problem, and I changed to a plane headed for Kansas City. The airplane was fully loaded—every seat was filled. I was assigned a seat in the rear of the plane—the very last row in the tail.

Rain was streaming down the outside of the windows, and the pilot instructed the passengers to “buckle up.” He said, “*Hang on! It’s going to be a bumpy ride!*” The stewardesses took their seats in the back of the plane near where I was sitting, and I heard them quietly discussing the weather forecast which did not sound good.

The plane taxied and took off. Lightning flashed in the sky, and the winds blew, bumping the plane around in the air! The pilot again came on the intercom and instructed all passengers, including stewardesses, to remain seated during the entire flight! There would be no snacks, and no one was supposed to exit their seats for any reason—not even for a bathroom break.

One man in the back of the plane defied the “don’t unbuckle” directive and almost ran to the bathroom. He was pale, and I believe he was possibly sick to his stomach! The plane continued to bump and jerk in the turbulence, and I gripped the armrest to try to steady myself.

The wild bucking movements of the plane were particularly pronounced in the tail of the plane, and I wondered if the tail would break off—*it really was a very bumpy ride!* The plane finally landed safely in Kansas City in a zero-visibility fog, but the plane was still all in one piece. I was a bit worn, thirsty, and needing a bathroom break, but I had made it—I was thankful!

After my husband died a few years ago, that was also the beginning of a “bumpy ride” for me. If you are reading this, you too may be on

a “bumpy ride” due to your loss. I wish that I could wave a magic wand and take away your pain and fears, particularly your loneliness, but I cannot.

What I might suggest:

1. Grieving is not easy and how you grieve will be as unique as you are.
2. It’s going to be a bumpy ride, so buckle up, and hang on.
3. You can do this!
4. You have to—what other choice do you have?
5. Take care of yourself—eat as well as you can, drink plenty of water, and sleep as best you can.
6. Give yourself time to heal at your own pace, in your own way.
7. Look for little things you can enjoy along the way.
8. Allow others to help you as your “plane” bumps around.
9. It does get easier.
10. Life will be different, but life can have a purpose again.



Yes, grieving can be a bumpy ride. Your “plane” may land a bit tattered, but you can make it! Storms do pass, and the sun is always shining above the clouds. It’s just hiding, waiting to peek through.

J. Dawn Rountree

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

—Reinhold Niebuhr