
INTERNATIONAL GRIEF INSTITUTE
RESILIENCE RX™
TIPS FOR ADJUSTING TO LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

SINGING THERAPY FOR THE BEREAVED

SELF CARE TECHNIQUES
The science behind why they work and how to implement them after loss



An iCare Aftercare™ resource
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SINGING THERAPY

The mind and the voice work together, and our voice can be a powerful tool of expression. Singing connects the mind with the heart and the heart with the soul. Further, it has a positive emotional impact on our brain and well-being by bypassing our intellect and tapping into our emotions.

Whatever we feel and think affects our energy, especially when grieving a loved one—making singing a good tool to help us feel better. Many people don't sing because they don't believe they have a good voice, yet we don't need to be a professional singer to harness the power of singing.

IMPROVES YOUR HEALTH

For most people, singing is a way of escaping into another world. It's also good for our health. While singing, a person's brain must follow a rhythm, a melody, and lyrics, which help us focus and also helps us release pent emotions.

Research also shows that singing eases stress by lowering cortisol, a stress hormone that is often triggered by grief. It also helps our immune system fight off illnesses (Front. Psychology, 2015, Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 2004).

Emotional pain often triggers physical pain such as headaches, autoimmune flares, and other chronic pain conditions. Yet studies show that singing with a group not only releases endorphins, it raises our pain tolerance in ways that just listening to music doesn't (Dunbar et al, 2012).

Further, singing in a group doesn't just help us with physical pain. Studies show it helps stabilize our mood and sense of well-being, making it a good support option along the grief journey (Fancourt et al, 2019).

Vocalizing songs doesn't just lower the stress hormone cortisol. Spontaneous singing has been shown to also trigger a release of oxytocin, a feel-good hormone that reduces fear and anxiety. Being tone-deaf doesn't matter, because singing on- or off-key both involve deep breathing which oxygenates the brain. The combination of oxytocin and brain oxygenation is like a joyful cocktail for the body, making it especially useful for those who are mourning a loved one. It also burns up to 180 calories per hour (Livestrong.com).

Further, crooning to your favorite song also triggers the vagus nerve to secrete a chemical that lowers blood pressure, slows the heart rate, and deactivates the amygdala, the stress center of the brain, all of which help to calm us down.

Last yet far from least, singing has also been shown to reduce snoring (Pai et al, 2008). Less snoring means a better night's sleep. When we feel better, we cope better.

IT'S FREE, EASY, AND HELPFUL

One of the benefits of singing is that it doesn't cost anything, you don't need an instrument, and you can sing anytime, anywhere. When the pandemic forced societies into quarantine, people around the world sang from their balconies to release stress and anxiety.

Whether you serenade sidewalk fans below or sing privately in your car, engaging in singing is one of the easiest therapeutic activities we can do after losing a loved one.



The woods would be quiet if no bird sang but the one that sang best.

— HENRY VAN DYKE

HOW IT WORKS

- ✓ Burns calories
- ✓ Reduces stress
- ✓ Reduces snoring
- ✓ Boosts confidence
- ✓ Triggers endorphins
- ✓ Raises pain tolerance
- ✓ Improves lung function
- ✓ Reduces fear and anxiety

SINGING TIPS

How to sing with confidence:

- ✓ Begin by singing songs you already like
- ✓ Try karaoke to learn words to your favorite songs
- ✓ Exhale steadily as you sing so the sound comes from your chest
- ✓ Stand up straight so your lungs can fully expand while you sing
- ✓ Practice singing scales to expand your vocal range
- ✓ If you want to continue to develop your singing, consider joining a local choir to learn singing skills:
 - ✓ Virtual choir
 - ✓ Church choir
 - ✓ Theater choir
 - ✓ Community choir