Taking Care of Ourselves While Grieving

When your child has a parent die, it's natural to focus all of your energy on that child's well-being. But it is also important to take care of your own mental and physical health. To be a caregiver to your child, you have to be a caregiver to yourself.

However, it can feel impossible to find the time to engage in self-care, and it is all too easy to put it off in the face of caring for your child, particularly when you are grieving too. But even small acts can have an impact on your mental health.

Below are a few suggestions for ways to build simple health-care habits with just a little time:

Two-Minute Exercises

- **Five deep breaths** — Breathe in for four seconds, hold it for four seconds, then exhale for four seconds. Repeat four more times.

- **Text a friend** — Maintaining contact with friends and family is crucial. Take two minutes to initiate a quick conversation with someone you love.

- **Drink a glass of water** — It is easy to forget how basic things like staying hydrated can impact our mental health. Fill a glass of water and find a quiet place to sit and drink it.

- **Stretch** — Two minutes is enough time to stretch your legs, arms, and back.

Ten-Minute Exercises

- **Get outside** — Science shows that spending time in nature has positive impacts on physical and mental health. Step outside and drink a cup of coffee, take a walk around the block, or just watch the clouds.

- **Listen to a favorite song** — Music can help transport you to another place and state of mind. Put on headphones and listen to one or two songs that make you feel good.

- **Clean one space** — Getting things in order can help you regain a sense of control. Pick one small space — a desk or a kitchen drawer — and clean it.

Thirty-Minute Exercises

- **Read** — Thirty minutes is enough time to read a chapter of a book, or a magazine article.

- **Watch a show** — Pick something fun that lasts twenty to thirty minutes.

- **Take a long walk** — Find a trail to hike, walk around a few blocks, or find a quiet place to stroll. The exercise will help clear your mind and keep you healthy.

Taking care of yourself is a habit. Try to pick one or two of these to do every day. And remember, it's also important to find a way to incorporate major healthy habits into your life — healthy eating, a good night's sleep, and speaking to someone about your feelings.