



## "Ten Heartfelt Strategies: Coping with Loss and Embracing Hope"

### **1. Self-Care.**

Self-care is the first step in adjusting to loss. Make sure you prioritize your physical and emotional well-being. Grieving and learning to cope with a living loss can be exhausting, so ensure you get enough rest, eat well-balanced meals, and engage in physical activity to release stress and tension. Allow yourself time to process your emotions and don't be too hard on yourself if you experience various feelings.

### **2. Seek Support.**

Don't go through this challenging time alone. Reach out to friends, family, or support groups who can provide a listening ear, empathy, and understanding. At Braille Institute, I met kids, just like me who were losing their sight. I did not feel so alone in my sight loss journey. Talking to others who have been through similar experiences can be incredibly helpful in feeling less isolated and finding ways to cope.

### **3. Professional Help.**

If you need someone to talk to outside your inner circle, don't hesitate to seek individual help from a counselor, therapist, or grief support specialist. My mentor Penny (a Marriage and Family Counselor) provided me with valuable guidance and tools to navigate through the grieving process. She created a safe space for me to express my emotions.

### **4. Acceptance & Adjustment.**

Living losses often involve changes in roles and expectations. When I first experienced significant changes in my sight, I recognized I could no longer accomplish certain tasks, such as washing the dishes and walking independently. I learned adaptive skills and how to walk using a white cane. Be patient with yourself as you adapt to the new reality and find ways to cope with the changes.

### **5. Self-Advocacy.**

Will help you foster a sense of empowerment and self-efficacy during the bereavement process. I learned to ask for help if I couldn't locate an object or read printed materials. I approached my teachers when I was absent from school to obtain the assignments I missed. By actively engaging in my healing journey, I developed resilience and found opportunities for personal growth even in the face of loss.

## **6. Acquire Adaptive Skills.**

Learning alternative techniques such as braille, magnification software, or traveling with the use of a white cane will boost your independence and confidence. I attended Orientation Center for The Blind. This residential school offers specialized classes taught by professionals who have expert knowledge about the ramifications of sight loss.

## **7. Learn Assistive Technology.**

Immerse yourself in assistive technology. Take advantage of devices such as screen readers, text-to-speech software, and mobile apps designed for people who are blind or have low vision. These tools are a real game changer! They will help you access information, read books, and navigate digital platforms more effectively. Initially, I learned to use this technology from Assistive technology specialists (who are also blind) at Braille Institute.

## **8. Remain Socially Active:**

I found it helpful to attend events I always enjoyed, such as movies and concerts. I continued my hobbies, like hiking and volunteering to combat social isolation and build a supportive network. I participate in social activities, such as conferences and conventions. I am a member of Toastmasters International. I attend regular club meetings. I am active with American Council of the Blind, as well as California Council of the Blind. I advocate for causes that impact people like me, who have low vision or blindness.

## **9. Find Your Purpose:**

As I reflect on my sight loss journey, I have found meaning and my life's purpose of being an inspirational speaker. I learned from the experience, and have grown as an individual, and I want to contribute to others who are going through similar challenges.

## **10. An Attitude of Gratitude.**

I choose to focus on what I have, rather than what I don't have. Practicing gratitude will help you focus on the things you still have and the positive aspects of your life. Expressing gratitude through journaling will help shift your mindset and bring a sense of perspective and appreciation.