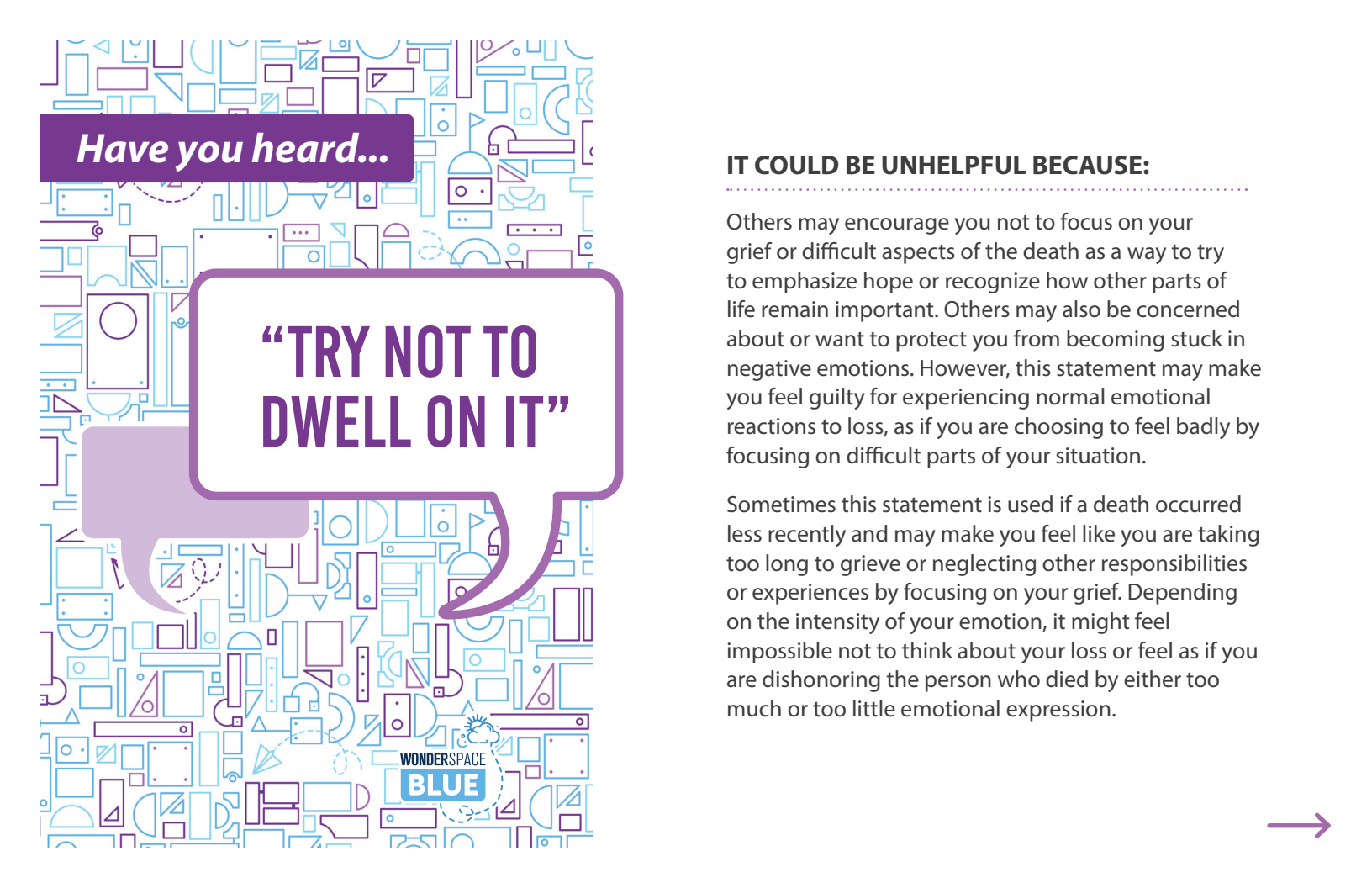




Have you heard...

**“TRY NOT TO
DWELL ON IT”**

WONDERSPACE
BLUE

IT COULD BE UNHELPFUL BECAUSE:

Others may encourage you not to focus on your grief or difficult aspects of the death as a way to try to emphasize hope or recognize how other parts of life remain important. Others may also be concerned about or want to protect you from becoming stuck in negative emotions. However, this statement may make you feel guilty for experiencing normal emotional reactions to loss, as if you are choosing to feel badly by focusing on difficult parts of your situation.

Sometimes this statement is used if a death occurred less recently and may make you feel like you are taking too long to grieve or neglecting other responsibilities or experiences by focusing on your grief. Depending on the intensity of your emotion, it might feel impossible not to think about your loss or feel as if you are dishonoring the person who died by either too much or too little emotional expression.



HERE'S THE TRUTH:



There is a significant difference between allowing yourself to experience normal emotional reactions following a death, and focusing only on negative aspects of life, or of your relationship with the person who died. Grief ebbs and flows, and involves a wide range of emotions over a long period of time. This may mean that you feel sad, lonely, angry, or other difficult emotions for multiple days or weeks. Because your loss was so important, your emotions may last a long time.

Some people process grief by focusing on happy memories of the person who died. If this feels natural to your grieving process and does not involve effortful shutdown of negative emotions, it can be a healthy aspect of grief. However, every relationship has harder parts to it, and you may also have difficult memories connected with the death which you need to process as well.

Normal grief sometimes increases in intensity, depending on what else is going on in your life. You might find that anniversaries, birthdays, or other events that remind you of the person who died make your grief feel heavier at times. Like any other kind of healing, grief does not decrease every day. Honoring your relationship and grieving process may mean managing more intensity, even if it occurs a long time after a death.

Although grief is not a mental health problem, it can lead to mental health symptoms. If others who care about you are sharing concerns about your ability to cope, you feel unable to manage your emotions most of the time, or you consider harming yourself or others, it is important to seek further support which may include professional intervention.

You could say:

- **“Sometimes grief makes feelings very strong, and these feelings might last a long time.”** Because your person was so important, you might feel lots of strong, difficult emotions that might pop up right away, or a long time after the death. Sometimes it helps to get those emotions out of your brain and body in safe ways, like doing something very active, painting a picture of what you are feeling, or writing down what you are thinking about when your brain is going fast.
- **“You have good and hard memories of the person who died.”** It’s okay to think about times that you were happy with your person, and times that you might have been angry with them or scared about what happened to them. All of these memories are part of you and your relationship with your person.
- **“It’s okay to feel all of your emotions, but if you feel stuck, we can find more support.”** Counselors, groups, and other resources are available if we need them. Would you like to try talking to someone about your experiences? Consider sharing about a time when talking with a support group or counselor helped you to help remove fears or concerns related to seeking help from others.