

GRIEF AND LOSS

Grief is a personal experience and reaction to loss. Grief can occur after many different types of loss including the death of a loved one, divorce or separation, diagnoses of a serious illness, children leaving home, loss of a job or property, or the death of a pet. Grief is a natural and common emotion and while it is a painful experience it can eventually lead to healing and emotional growth.

Stages of Grief:

Each person reacts differently. The following emotions are common to grieving people but they are not all-inclusive and not always experienced. These emotions are individualized and can come in any order.

- » **Shock and denial:** Disbelief is often the first reaction after learning of a loss.
- » **Anger:** Grieving people will often feel resentment towards a loved one for leaving. They could also feel anger towards themselves and others for not preventing the loss.
- » **Guilt:** People may feel regret for things they did or didn't do prior to the loss. They may blame themselves for the death of their loved one or feel guilt for the way they treated them before the loss.
- » **Depression:** Those who have lost loved ones may experience deep sadness. They may be overcome with loneliness and feel that they cannot make it on their own.
- » **Fear:** The death of a loved one may cause feelings of worry or panic. People often worry about their own deaths or become frightened by the thought of life without their loved one.
- » **Hope:** Eventually a person will begin to see a hopeful future and may even acquire new insights as a result of their grief process. They will become more interested in new interests and relationships and regain their confidence.

How to Work Through Grief:

- » **Express your feelings:** Talk to someone you trust. Holding your pain inside can create even more problems.
- » **Accept help:** Embrace offerings of both emotional and practical support. No one expects you to handle everything on your own.
- » **Get enough rest:** Take time to rest and get enough sleep at night. Tiredness is a common symptom of grief.
- » **Stay healthy:** Grief puts stress on the body, requiring attention to your health. Eat a healthy diet and avoid harmful substances such as alcohol and drugs.
- » **Try new activities:** New activities will help you make friends and you may even discover a hidden talent. Join an organization or a club, do some volunteer work, or even take a class.
- » **Set goals:** Write down both short-term and long-term goals, such as writing letters or taking a trip. Keeping lists can help you stay focused and help you to see progress.
- » **Keep memories alive:** Looking at photos of your loved one, sharing memories with friends and family and recalling good times can help you deal with their loss. You don't have to forget about your loved one or pretend that you don't miss them.

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Symptoms of Grief:

- » Difficulty sleeping
- » Weight Loss
- » Irritability
- » Depression
- » Fatigue
- » Difficulty concentrating
- » Loss of interest in friends, work, church, etc.
- » Self- condemnation
- » Suicidal thoughts
- » Physical symptoms

How You Can Help:

- » **Help with chores:** Sometimes the most routine practices can become difficult. Also by helping with such chores as running errands, shopping for groceries, and cleaning you can open up time for your friend.

Help with correspondence: Offer to help write thank you letters or to answer the phone or take messages.