

Considerations When Grieving

- The most important thing to remember is there is no right way or wrong way to grieve
- People grieve in their own time and in their own way
- Everything you feel during bereavement is normal
- If you feel you cannot cope with your loss alone, you don't have to

Dealing with Grief

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Educational Series



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In one way or another, we are all affected by death. Losses are inevitable and are ever present in all lives. Death is universal. Grief is universal. We all must cope with bereavement at some stage in our lives. Even though death can be separated into two categories, long-term illness and sudden death, all death is sudden. The finality of death brings to those left behind a tremendous amount of emotional pain. Grief is not something abnormal; rather, it is a normal and inevitable step in our journey through life. Two simple definitions of grief are:

- The conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar pattern or behavior
- A normal, natural and painful emotional reaction to loss

We can grieve not only for the passing of a human life, but also for the death of a relationship (divorce) or we can suffer the same emotional reactions over the loss of a beloved pet.

Stages of Grief

Shock

- It is difficult to accept the death immediately after the death of a loved one

Emotional Release

- Awareness of the loss is accompanied by intense spasms of grief
- In this stage, a grieving individual can weep uncontrollably and have difficulty sleeping

Panic

- This phase can include mental instability
- Some other common symptoms:

- » Wandering around aimlessly
- » Forgetting things
- » Not being able to finish a project that was started
- Physical symptoms also can appear
 - » Tightness in the throat
 - » Heaviness in the chest
 - » An empty feeling in the stomach
 - » Tiredness and fatigue
 - » Headaches, migraine headaches
 - » Gastric and bowel upsets

Guilt

- At this stage, an individual can begin to feel guilty about failures to do enough for the deceased and guilt over what happened or what did not happen

Hostility

- Some individuals feel anger at the loss of the loved one

Inability to Resume Usual Activities

- The ability to concentrate on daily activities may be severely limited
- A grieving person's entire being—emotional, physical and spiritual—is focused on the loss that just occurred

Reconciliation of Grief

- There are no set time frames for healing
- Each individual is different

Hope

- Plans are made for the future and the individual is able to move forward in life with stable feelings

Tips for Handling Grief

- Take time
- Don't make major decisions
- Avoid the temptation to use alcohol or drugs
- Cry
- Know that there will be good days and bad days
- Remember the loved one often and as much as you need to
- Seek people who will understand your need to talk about what happened
- Allow yourself time to heal
- Pay attention to your health
- Make sure you are getting enough sleep
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise
- Ask for what you need from others
- Seek out grief counseling if you feel you cannot cope alone
- Join a grief support group
- Join an electronic bulletin board
- Remember your grief is individual to you