

Coping with Grief and Loss

There is no right way to grieve. Each person experiences and expresses grief in his or her own way.

Loss is a natural part of life. Everyone experiences loss, which brings with it another natural and very human response — grief. Like resting when we are tired or drinking when we are thirsty, grieving is a normal, necessary part of staying healthy. Grief is nature’s way of healing an emotional wound. The process of grief takes place over time. The important thing is to allow yourself to grieve and not try to suppress what you are feeling.



Normal grief experiences may include:

Physical sensations

- Stomach hollowness, hunger, nausea, poor appetite
- Chest tightness, breathlessness, throat pain
- Shakiness/headaches
- Lack of energy, overall weakness
- Overly sensitive to noise
- Sense of depersonalization, “nothing seems real”

Behaviors

- Sleep and appetite disturbance
- Crying, sighing
- Absent-minded behavior
- Social withdrawal/restlessness
- Increase in accidents/illness
- Change in work performance
- Yelling, irritability
- Poor personal hygiene
- Sloppy appearance

Thoughts

- Disbelief: “This can’t be true”
- Confusion, forgetfulness
- Preoccupation, obsessive thinking
- Finality: “It will never be the same”
- Forging ahead: “I have to move on”
- Fear of your own or other’s death
- Sense of presence
- Dreams of deceased

Feelings

- Sadness, Depression, Guilt
- Anger, Frustration, Hostility
- Victimized, Helpless
- Loss of Control
- Shock, Numbness
- Yearning, Lonely
- Fear, Dread
- Relief
- Peace, Resolution

The tasks of grief:

Accept the reality of the loss

Feel the pain of grief

Adjust to a new environment in which the loss is missing

Reinvest emotional energy in new relationships

Take care of yourself:

- Get adequate rest & follow familiar routines
- Maintain healthy eating habits and exercise
- Find time to talk with family and friends
- Take time for leisure activities and down time
- Seek medical advice or counseling if needed