



GRIEF AND LOSS

Grief and loss can come from many areas. Loss of job, relationship, or even moving. No one can tell someone how long or in what way they “should” grieve, because each person’s grief is unique. But there are elements of bereavement that are more or less common to all who pass through it. Understanding these common elements and ways to help to deal with them is important in the healing process.

Emotional Reactions

- Shock:** This is often the first response. It is a kind of numbness and no emotions or tears seem to come.
- Denial:** There is an intellectual understanding of the loss but on a deeper level all of the memories and habits are denying death. Some people have more denial than others, but facing the reality is the most important step in the healing process.
- Anger:** Anger comes from several sources: 1) from a sense of frustration that there was nothing one could do to prevent the death and, 2) anger at the person for leaving you. Often people direct this anger at someone else such as the doctor, family members or God. Anger needs to be expressed. Bottling up anger can be very destructive and hurt your relationships.
- Guilt:** There is always some sense of guilt in grief. Usually the guilt is felt because of something that happened or something that was neglected around the time of the death.
- Depression:** When the numbness and anger diminish, hopelessness and despair may set in. Some people feel there is nothing to live for, nothing seems worthwhile.

Physical Sensation and Behaviors

- Hollowness in the stomach
- Tightness in the chest or throat
- Over-sensitivity to noise
- A sense of depersonalization “I walk down the street and nothing seems real, including myself.”
- Breathlessness, feeling short of breath
- Weakness in the muscles
- Lack of energy
- Dry mouth
- Sleep disturbances
- Over and undereating
- Absent-mindedness, forgetfulness

The Village Family Service Center is here to help. Please do not hesitate in reaching out at 1-800-627-8220 or visit www.VillageEAP.com password: VillageEAP



- Social withdrawal
- Dreams of the loss, nightmare's
- Avoiding reminders of the loss
- Searching and calling out
- Sighing
- Restless over activity
- Crying
- Visiting places or carrying objects that remind the survivor of the person

The Healing Process

1. Accept the grief; allow yourself to grieve
2. Talk about it
3. Be gentle to yourself; take care of yourself
4. Avoid being self-critical
5. Don't buy into others' expectations of how you should grieve
6. Don't isolate yourself; use your support systems
7. Keep busy
8. Postpone major decisions
9. Join a support group
10. Record your thoughts in a journal

When to Seek Help

Seek professional assistance if depression, feelings that you don't value your own life and an ongoing sense of total despair continue. If you have not grieved, years later your life can be out of control and you will need to go back and allow yourself to grieve. Substituting alcohol, drugs, overeating or more negative behaviors can result if you are unable to accept the death or loss. Professional help can move you along the road to acceptance and healing.

Sources:

E. Kubler-Ross, A Hillyard Jensen & J. William Worden

Health Span Behavioral Health Services – Abbott Northwestern Hospital – Mercy & Unity Hospitals – United Hospital