

Natural and Normal Responses to Grief

Grief is a healthy, human response to situations such as:

- Death of a family member or friend
- Separation or divorce
- Miscarriage
- Injury or disability
- Loss of pet, property, or job
- Children leaving the home
- Moving to a new place
- Disappointment in a child or loved one.
- Giving up or loss of a dream

Grieving over any loss is painful and at times seems overwhelming. Many of us wonder if we are grieving in the right way and worry whether the feelings being experienced are normal. The following are normal and natural responses to grief:

- Feeling emotionally numb
- Knowing that loss has occurred yet still experiencing difficulty believing this.
- Feeling tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest or in the pit of the stomach.
- Having a loss of appetite or eating more than before
- Having a desire to smoke or drink in a greater amount than before.
- Feeling restless and looking for activities.
- Finding it difficult to concentrate or complete tasks
- Having difficulty sleeping, waking early, and often dreaming of the loss.
- Being overly concerned with your health and even developing symptoms similar to those of your loved one.
- Feeling exhausted and lacking in energy.
- Feeling low at times of birthday, holidays, and special occasions.
- Spending money on things not usually purchased.
- Feeling preoccupied with financial concerns.
- Telling and retelling things about your loved one (or other loss) and the experience of the loss.
- Talking things over with the deceased.
- Feeling mood changes over the slightest provocation.
- Feeling guilty for what was said or not said or for not having done enough to prevent the loss.
- Being angry or irritated at the wrong person or the wrong circumstances or the world.
- Feeling intensely angry at your loved one for leaving you.
- Having difficulty making decisions on your own.
- Sensing your loved one's presence, believing you hear his or her voice or expecting him or her to come back.
- Experiencing an intense preoccupation with the life of the deceased.
- Assuming mannerisms or traits of your loved one.
- Feeling as though life doesn't have much meaning.
- Not wanting to be with people or having difficulty initiating contact with others.
- Feeling self-pity and not feeling needed.
- Crying at unexpected times.

“And perhaps there is a limit to the grieving that the human heart can do. As when one adds salt to a tumbler of water, there comes a point where simply no more will be absorbed.”

— Sarah Waters, *The Little Stranger*