

## *Understanding Grief*

Grief, with its many ups and downs, lasts far longer than society in general recognizes. Be patient with yourself.

Each person's grief is individual. You and your family will experience it and cope with it differently.

Crying is an acceptable and healthy expression of grief and releases built-up tension for the bereaved person. Cry freely as you feel the need.

Physical reactions to the death of a loved one may include loss of appetite or overeating, and sleeplessness or a change in sleep patterns. The bereaved may find that s/he has very little energy and cannot concentrate. A balanced diet, rest, and moderate exercise are especially important for you at this time.

Avoid the use of drugs and alcohol. Medication should be taken as prescribed by your health care provider.

Friends and relatives may be uncomfortable around you. They want to ease your pain, but don't know how. Take the initiative and help them learn how to be supportive of you. Talk about your loved one so they know this is okay with you.

Whenever possible, put off major decisions such as moving, changing jobs, etc. for at least a year.

Avoid making hasty decisions about your loved one's belongings. Do not allow others to take over or to rush you. You can do it little by little whenever you feel ready.

You may feel at times that you have nothing to live for and may think about a release from this intense pain. Be assured that many bereaved persons feel this way, but that a sense of purpose and meaning does return. The pain does lessen. If you feel this way, do not isolate yourself. Seek out supportive friends or relatives or professional help.



Guilt, real or imagined, is a normal part of grief. It surfaces in thoughts and feelings of “if only”. In order to resolve this guilt, learn to express and share these feelings and learn to forgive yourself.

Anger is another common reaction to loss. Anger, like guilt, needs expression and sharing in a healthy and acceptable way.

Children are often the forgotten grievers within a family. They are experiencing many of the same emotions you are, so share thoughts and tears with them. Though it is a painful time, be sure they feel loved and included.

Holidays and the anniversaries of your loved one’s birth and death can be stressful times. Consider the feelings of the entire family in planning how to spend the day. Allow time and space for your own emotional needs.

A loved one’s death often causes the bereaved to challenge and examine his faith or philosophy of life. Don’t be disturbed if you are questioning old beliefs. Talk about it. For many, faith offers help to accept the unacceptable.