

Natural Grief Responses

Grief is a natural process after a death. It hurts when someone dies, but allowing time to grieve will eventually help to ease the pain. Grief is challenging and takes many forms. It can be physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Grief is not a problem to be solved; it is a process to be lived.

People are often overwhelmed by the intensity and duration of their grief. Here are some of the natural responses that people may experience.

- Disbelief – feeling as though the death isn't real or an inability to believe that it has actually happened
- Helplessness – difficulty in performing activities of daily living
- Hopelessness – feelings that life may not be worth living
- Forgetfulness – not finishing what they start, absentmindedness
- Fearfulness - that they or someone else will die or that they are going crazy
- Restlessness – inability to sit still or concentrate
- Anger – that the death has occurred or that the person has left them
- Guilt – over something said or not said/something they did or did not do
- Changes in sleep or appetite – eating or sleeping more or less than before
- Emptiness – felt physically in the chest or stomach or other physical symptoms
- A sense of the person's presence...expecting the person to walk through the door at a usual time or hearing their voice or seeing their face
- Desire to keep things exactly as they were, wear their clothing, look at pictures
- A need to remember, tell, and retell stories about the person who died and/or about the death experience; or inability to tolerate “reminders”
- Yearning or longing; aching for one more touch
- Tears or “grief bursts” at unexpected times
- Inability to express how they are really feeling because of a need to “take care of” or “be polite to” others who are uncomfortable discussing the death