

Dealing with Grief

Grief is nature's way of protecting us against a loss.



Reactions to Grief:

- ◆ Disbelief
- ◆ Sadness
- ◆ Guilt
- ◆ Fear
- ◆ Lack of motivation and interest in usual activities
- ◆ Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- ◆ A resurfacing of psychological problems
- ◆ Renewed sadness related to a past loss
- ◆ Focusing on recounting the events that led up to the death

No matter how prepared you are, the death of someone close to you can be difficult to overcome. Grief is nature's way of protecting us against a loss. The grief process begins with the news that someone close to you is seriously ill. For others, the grieving does not actually begin until you receive the sudden and unexpected news of the individual's death. Despite the circumstances, it is important to allow yourself to grieve so that you can deal with the loss in a healthy manner and grow stronger as an individual in the process.

It is not unusual for an individual to engage in behaviors such as sleeping a lot, compulsive buying and drinking serve as common defense mechanisms that prevent the individual from facing the reality of the situation. Often a person uses denial as a defense mechanism to protect themselves from the truth about the situation. For those individuals, the truth can be too painful to deal with at that moment. However, you cannot stay in denial forever. At some point, it is necessary to accept the loss before you can begin the process of healing.

The stages of grief process include shock, denial, guilt, depression, acceptance, working the pain, integration, and developing new strengths. Unfortunately, each individual works through the process of grieving at different pace. People will experience a range of emotions at varying times. Often special occasions such as holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries can bring back the feelings of loss and mourning.

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The following are some suggestions to help you deal with the news of a life-threatening illness or death of someone that is close to you:

- ✓ It is normal to experience a wide range of emotional responses.
- ✓ Be gentle to yourself and forgive yourself for what you did or did not do.
- ✓ It is important to be available to speak with others who share in your grief and loss. This can be beneficial to all of the individuals involved.
- ✓ Do not restrict your emotions. Cry when you feel like crying and scream when you feel like screaming.
- ✓ Seek the comfort and assistance of friends and professionals. You do not need to go through the grief process alone.

Grieving allows us the opportunity to experience the pain and begin to overcome that pain through a process that can involve crying, talking to others, or writing down our experiences. It is just as important to realize that an emotional wound from the death of a loved one will require time to heal in the same manner that a physical wound will require time to heal. Just as the cliché says that time heals all wounds, the same process works for the emotional wounds related to the death of someone that we are close to.

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