Grief

Grief is a normal natural reaction to some kind of loss. It is an emotional response usually caused by an ending of something or a change in something. That something is familiar, comfortable and desired.

The experience of grief is different for each of us. It is personal. It is a difficult process and can be more or less difficult depending on circumstances. Grief often involves a variety of emotions including anger, sadness, fear, loneliness, guilt, regret, depression, emptiness, confusion, anxiety and despair.

It is not uncommon to experience a mixture of these and other emotions. You may feel like you are on a roller coaster. Your emotions can quickly change from one moment to the next.

The challenge is to accept our emotions and give ourselves permission to feel whatever emotions arise. Accept that this is part of the grieving process. Don’t judge yourself or anyone else for how they feel. Try to share your feelings – it’s good to talk about them.

Grief is painful. But we cannot avoid it. We can’t go over, under or around it. The only way is directly through it.

Many turn to short-term fixes: alcohol, drugs, over eating, sleeping, shopping, hoarding, etc. These only tend to interfere with the healthy resolution of grief and may become just another problem.

Grief takes time. It takes as long as it takes.

Many experts have proposed that there is a predictable progression through stages of grief. The most recognized of these is that of Elizabeth Kubler Ross. She proposed that we move through five stages: denial, anger, depression, bargaining and acceptance.

No one moves through these in some orderly fashion, finishing one and moving to the next. Instead, we may go back and forth, repeating one or more stage before we move on.
Grief and Loss

Loss is an inevitable part of life, and grief is a natural part of the healing process. Feelings of loss are personal, and only you know what is significant to you. Dealing with a significant loss can be one of the most difficult times in a person’s life.

The length of the grief process is different for everyone. There is no schedule for grief. Although it can be quite painful at times, the grief process should not be rushed. It is important to be patient with yourself as you experience your unique reactions to the loss. With time and support, things generally do get better. However, it is normal for significant dates, holidays, or other reminders to trigger feelings related to the loss. Taking care of yourself, seeking support, and acknowledging your feelings during these times are ways that can help you cope.

Common Grief Reactions:

- Feeling empty and numb, as if you are in a state of shock
- Physical responses such as nausea, trouble breathing, crying, confusion, lack of energy, dry mouth, or changes in sleeping and eating patterns
- Anger at a situation, a person or in general
- Guilt about what you did or did not do
- Withdrawal from family, friends and common activities
- Difficulty focusing, working or making decisions
- Questions about faith or spirituality

If you are worried about any of the feelings or reactions you are having, it is a good idea to talk to a person who is close to you or a professional. The most important thing to remember is that grief is a process, and it takes time.
Coping With Grief

As you grieve, it is helpful to find activities that help you heal. Each one of us has an individual style of coping with painful experiences. The following suggestions may help you manage your feelings of grief.

- Share your thoughts, feelings and memories with others. Find those that are comfortable listening to you talk about it and let them know how it helps you. Consider writing in a journal if you are not ready to talk.
- Accept support. Let your family and friends know what you need and what you find helpful.
- Get physical exercise. It can help you sleep better, lowers your risk of depression, and can boost your immune system.
- Eat healthy, good foods.
- Use religion, philosophy, poetry, music, art, gardening, and walks in nature to gain relief and understanding. All religions recognize that griever need special help, even if you have not been attending regularly. You won’t be turned away.
- Have a little fun. Recognize that laughter doesn’t mean you are being disrespectful. Don’t underestimate the effects of small pleasures.
- Postpone major decisions, such as selling your home or changing jobs.
- Allow time to grieve. Give yourself permission to backslide. Be patient with yourself. Read about grief so that you can see what you are feeling is normal.
- Resist the temptation to use alcohol or drugs to numb your pain. These can interfere with the grieving process by delaying it or covering it up.
- Know that seeking professional help doesn’t mean you are weak, inadequate or crazy. Consider getting professional help if you feel overwhelmed, hopeless, or helpless.
- Respect your spouse’s timetable and method of grieving.
- Prepare for the holidays and anniversaries. Even when you have moved forward in your grief, these dates may bring back some painful feelings. Make plans to be with friends and family members with whom you feel comfortable. This is also the perfect time to check in with other family members about how they’re doing with their grief and share mutual support.

You cannot prevent, cure or skip the grieving process. The only way out is participating in the journey. Some day the pain will lessen, leaving you with cherished memories of your loved one.
Dealing with Survivor Guilt

When a loved one dies, feelings of guilt can be felt as there may be a tendency to blame ourselves for something we did or didn’t do that may have contributed to the death or things that were done or not done or not said. This is common. Guilt is a strong emotion.

Symptoms of survivor guilt are often similar to those of anxiety and depression. They may be experienced as mild or severe and can include the following:

- Nightmares
- Sleeplessness
- Loss of motivation
- Flashbacks
- Reduction in or disinterest in self care
- Increase in irritability or agitation

If guilt is excessive or prolonged seek professional help to work through your symptoms.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an essential tool in our efforts to move forward in our grieving process.

Forgiveness is a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward another who has harmed you. It can bring peace of mind and frees you from corrosive anger.

Forgiveness involves letting go of deeply held negative feelings. It allows us to recognize our pain without letting that pain define us.

According to research, forgiveness:

- Makes us happier
- Improves our health
- Sustains relationships
- Helps resolve conflict
- Boosts kindness and connectedness
- Helps us heal
- Helps reduce trauma

Forgiveness is a process of releasing ourselves from a painful burden.
Additional Resources

Information needed for when death occurs:

Check list for survivors:


Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Ohio http://www.funeralsohio.org/documents.shtml

Can’t afford a funeral information https://www.funerals.org/frequently-asked-questions/2620-cantafford

Legal Resources

Ohio Legal Aid http://www.ohiolegalaid.org/?gclid=Cla1u72Q-sgCFZKLaQodwogAPA

Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation http://www.olaf.org/

Community Legal Aid NE Ohio http://www.communitylegalaid.org/

The Legal Aid Society of Columbus http://www.columbuslegalaid.org/

Southeastern Ohio Legal Services http://www.seols.org/

Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc http://www.lawolaw.org/

Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati http://www.lascinti.org/

The G.A.P. Network – a program of Prevention Action Alliance
6155 Huntley Road, Suite H
Columbus, Ohio 43229
Works Cited


