

Grief Information

(Adapted in part from Victoria Hospice)



Nanaimo Community Hospice Society

1080 St. George Crescent

Nanaimo, B.C. V9S 1X1

Telephone 250 591-8811

Email: Info@nanaimohospice.com

Website: www.nanaimohospice.com



FALLING APART

I seem to be falling apart.
My attention span can be
measured in seconds.
My patience in minutes.
I cry at the drop of a hat.
I forget things constantly.
The morning toast burns daily.
I forget to sign the checks.
Half of everything in the house is misplaced.
Feelings of anxiety and restlessness
are my constant companions.
Rainy days seem extra dreary.
Sunny days seem an outrage.
Other people's pain and frustration seem insignificant.
Laughing happy people seem out of place in my world.
It has become routine to feel half crazy.
I am normal I am told.
I am a newly grieving person.

By Eloise Cole



Ten Things to Know About Grief

When you are grieving, it helps to know what to expect. Although your grief is unique to your relationship with the person who died, there are some common themes. Bereaved people identified the ten things discussed below as important in understanding grief.

1. Global effect of loss

The death of someone very close to you can be a life-transforming event that affects all aspects of yourself and your life. It can feel as if your world has been shattered. The grief process is the journey between how things were and how they will be. It is an interior journey, like a labyrinth, moving toward central issues of meaning.

2. Grief is a natural process

The grief you feel at the death of someone important to you is the natural consequence of living and loving, of your meaningful connections with others. Grief is a normal part of life and a natural response to loss. Information about the phases of grief can help you to understand the responses that you experience.

3. Individual differences in grieving styles

Although grief has some definable outlines, how you grieve is a unique result of your personality, your past history of loss, and the relationship that you had with the person who died. Each person in your family will grieve in their own way and within their own timetable. To cope with their grief, some people will openly express the emotions that they experience while others will control their thoughts and emotions. Neither of these styles is right or wrong; each can be an effective way through grief.

4. Children and grief

Children look to the important adults in their lives to learn how to grieve. They are sensitive to the moods and behaviour of the adults around them and will not talk about their thoughts and feelings of loss unless the adults do. Children are frightened by what they do not know or understand. Simple information about death and grief is helpful to them.

5. Social connections and support

When you are grieving you want and need support from others now more than ever. Due to awkwardness or their own feelings of grief, some people may not be able to provide the understanding and caring that you expected from them. Because all of the relationships in your life will be altered in some way after a major loss, it is normal to look at, change, or sometimes end certain relationships. You may find that the company of other bereaved people is particularly comforting.

6. Experiences you might have in grief

When you are actively grieving, you can feel very different from your usual self as your emotions, your mind, and your reactions seem unreliable. It is possible that you are feeling intense pain and emotions that you have never felt before. You are not going crazy; this is a natural part of grief. Responses such as fatigue, forgetfulness and irritability result from your attention and energy being directed toward your grief and adjustment to loss.

7. Fluctuations in the grief process

As you journey along the path of grief, you will find that your feelings and responses vary at different times and phases of the process. There will be unpredictable ups and downs that may be felt as waves of grief or as good days and bad days. It is important to understand and value the good days as breaks or rests in your particular journey.

8. Self-care and what helps

There are things that you can do to help yourself at this challenging time. Getting information about grief can help you to understand your responses and your journey. Be gentle and patient with yourself as you grieve. Do what you can to keep some normal routine for health and social contact. Support may come from a variety of sources; family, friends, bereavement groups, chat rooms, etc. If you are concerned about yourself and your grief, seek professional counselling help.

9. Time for grief

Despite what you may hear about 'getting over it' or 'the first year', there are no time lines for grief; it takes as long as it takes. Often your grief journey is longer than you or other people expected and you may feel pressure to be better than you are by now, whenever this is. It is certain that this loss will continue to be part of your life and that you will always have times when you think about, miss, and grieve for the person who died.

10. Grief as a spiritual journey of healing

The death of someone significant in your life brings change that puts you on a different life path. Nothing will ever be the same, yet you must somehow go on and find meaning in the new path before you. As the journey continues, you may experience healing and personal growth as a result of the suffering you have endured and the lessons that you have learned about what you truly value.

We have chosen the image of a spiral as a metaphor for the journey through grief. In a spiral there are no dead ends and no wrong turnings. There is only one way – forward, even if it feels like going backwards at times. So it is with grief.

Each person's experience on the journey of grief will be different. This is a reflection of our personal style, our relationship with the person who died, our internal and social resources, and our past history of coping. As you journey through your own grief process, there will likely be unexpected turns and insights.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR EMOTIONS

When someone close to you dies, you grieve for them. Your grief is the journey from how things were to how things will be. In this journey, you may experience powerful and possibly unfamiliar emotions.

These emotions are part of the natural process of grief. Remember that an emotion is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong, it is just an emotion. Emotions are not rational, but they are very real responses. You feel emotions in your solar plexus, your gut and your heart. This is why expressions like 'heart-felt', 'butterflies in my stomach' and 'gut-wrenching' are common. Emotions or feelings can be uncomfortable but they are not harmful.

You may not be used to feeling the amount of emotion that your grief has triggered. Some manifestations of emotions, such as tears, sighing, or nervous irritation, may be distressing and embarrassing to you. You may also experience deep feelings with no outward expression. In the normal process of grief, you will work through emotions in layers. You may hope that once you experience an emotion, it is over. Then the next layer shows up. You are not back where you were – you are just facing a new level of the same emotion.

You might try to control or suppress your feelings with varying degrees of success. You can learn to work with your emotions, at least to some degree, so that you are not entirely at their mercy. To begin, take things a little at a time and deal with each emotion as it comes. Let yourself be in the experience, be curious about it, attend to what it is like in detail, and allow the feeling to move through you and out. With practice, you can choose where, when, and for how long to feel your emotions. They become something you journey with rather than wish to avoid.

SORROW

Some other words that you might use to describe sorrow include sadness, emptiness, loneliness, and longing. Sorrow is hard to put into words as words never really match your feeling or its depth. It is also hard to talk about, as other people may not be comfortable hearing about your pain. When you do not feel connected or understood, you may feel alone even in the presence of others.

Sorrow is your sadness for the loss itself. It may be expressed through weeping and crying. Expression of your sorrow may include sobbing and wailing also. The pain of sorrow is heartache. You might say that your heart is broken or that you feel wounded—like being half a person.

Your sorrow is related to the companionship and relationship that you are missing and to the love and connection you felt with the person. You may want the person back, want the relationship to continue, want someone to love and care for who loves you in return. Because you are missing the sharing of daily experiences and the intimate knowing of a close loved one, you may feel like you don't belong anywhere properly.

These aspects of sorrow can build on each other and you may be afraid to start crying in case you never stop.

What helps

Honour your sadness.

This is a natural part of experiencing your loss. Give yourself permission to include grief as part of your life right now. Balance feeling the sadness with doing the things that need doing.

Share your experiences.

Find people with whom you can be sad. The company of other bereaved people may be comforting as you can assume that they will have some similar experiences and understanding.

Express your sorrow.

It may be helpful to have a regular time and place to allow yourself to be sad and to weep, such as in your morning shower, at the grave side, or sitting on a memorial bench. Evening is not a good time for this as deep emotion can disturb your sleep.

Create ways of remembering.

Find meaningful yet realistic ways to keep the person who died in your life. Talk to him, celebrate her birthday, put up a Christmas stocking, keep his pictures out, talk about her. You will find what feels natural and positive for you.

The other side of sorrow

In *The Prophet*, Kahlil Gibran says “*Your joy is your sorrow unmasked*”. Once the harder part of sadness is done, there comes a sweetness in which you are able to recall the good times. Memories bring a sense of loving and being loved.

HOPELESSNESS AND DESPAIR

Hopelessness, despair, meaninglessness, and void are words used to describe the feelings that can emerge as you face the changes in your life that result from your loss. It may be that everything is different, or that all you held dear and true about love or life has disintegrated. You may experience fear and lack of confidence about the future.

This is the central pain of grief. As sadness empties out of you, then hopelessness and despair arise. You may feel there is ‘no light at the end of the tunnel’. Other images that people have used to describe their hopelessness are: a forest after a forest fire, a barren desert, the dark night of the soul or an abyss.

You may not be able to find the courage to put your feelings into words when you can’t believe in a future or you have ambivalence about it. Your grief may not be the way you thought it would be. Perhaps you never thought you would feel this way. If you see no point in going on and it’s hard to find a purpose, you wonder how you can go on living in these circumstances. Depression, suicidal thoughts, or a longing to have life be over may plague you now.

Hopelessness and despair can come at moments along the way or be a significant portion of your grief journey. These feelings are related to depression and you and others might call it that. In grief, your mood is variable and you have a range of emotions, for example, you have moments when you can laugh. In clinical depression, your mood is consistently low and you

are emotionally flat. Your fear may be that it will always be this way, but this is an in-between time—a still place or a transition—in which you integrate what has been with what is now. The stillness or emptiness allows you to move into what is to come.

What helps

Share your ambivalence.

If you are uncertain about how to go on, seek help from your doctor, counsellor or spiritual advisor.

Let others know and help.

If you can, spend time with the generations of your family. Identify people who have been through this and survived. These may be people in your own social network or characters in books and movies.

Value this time.

This is a time of transition and change. Allow yourself to reflect on where you have been and where you might be heading. Imagine that a seed has been planted in the ground; in the dark, it is preparing to grow.

Nurture yourself.

Pray or meditate regularly. Spend quiet time in nature and allow the beauty of the world to touch you. Notice the continuation of life's cycles. You may find it helps to keep a journal or to record your progress in some way. Remember to value your small accomplishments.

The other side of hopelessness

Recognition of the natural cycles of life can bring you an acceptance of yourself and your process. Being in touch with the beauty of the world can bring peace.

May Sarton wrote, "*Help us to be the always hopeful gardeners of the spirit who know that without darkness nothing comes to birth, as without light nothing flowers*". (*The Book of Virtues*)

GUILT

Most grieving people experience some feelings of guilt. To question yourself and your experience is part of being human. You may feel responsible, whether this is rational or not. Your own perfectionism or your personal history may magnify your sense of guilt.

You are trying to make meaning of something tragic and painful. Guilt arises from the belief that there must be a reason for everything that happens. When you are unable to find reasons, you might blame yourself as this seems better than having no explanation. Guilt also arises from a vulnerable, self-critical point of view and feelings of helplessness in not being able to change things then or now.

It is natural in grief to relive what happened, especially your part in it, and to ask questions like 'what if?' or 'why?' and to wonder 'if only'. You may have regrets about things done and not done, or said and not said. This can trap you in a downward spiral that feels so powerful and so real.

You may experience legitimate guilt related to things you really are responsible for. There may have been some omission, mistake, or action that resulted in the pain, illness or death. It may be something as ordinary as being a caregiver who was exhausted, lost patience, and was cranky. It may be something as terrible as having been the driver in a fatal car accident. If you had an ambivalent relationship with the person who died, you may have wished him dead or harboured ill will against her.

Your guilt may be based in negative judgements of yourself and your perfectionism. You may have judgements about how you are grieving, for example, you may feel guilty about the euphoria or relief you felt at the time of the death. You may tell yourself 'if I were a better person—bad things wouldn't happen—I would never make a mistake—I wouldn't feel so bad—I wouldn't be weak and grieving'. Feelings of guilt are often related to ideas about how you **should** be. Perhaps you tell yourself that you should be strong, should remember the good times and be happy, should not feel sad. Often these 'shoulds' are echoed in the advice of your family and social circle.

What helps

Examine your guilt.

Pay attention to what you say to yourself and about yourself. Describe what you feel guilty about and examine it. Look at what you are guilty of—the real part—and decide what you need to do about this.

Forgive yourself.

Guilt can feel like glue, holding you in an uncomfortable place. Forgiveness is the solvent that loosens this up. Practice self-forgiveness by identifying what you can forgive yourself for and what parts of your guilt you can let go of. There may be parts that you are not ready to let go of yet.

Get a reality check.

Talk to a trusted person for a reality check. This may help you to separate the real from the groundless guilt.

Take action.

You may need to do penance for things you judge yourself guilty of. Consider making amends rather than punishing yourself and remember once the price is paid, that's it. How could you pay the price?—perhaps through charitable works, positive action, or a change in behaviour. Plan what needs to happen, what action or steps you need to take or which person you need to talk to.

Repeat the above as necessary.

It is useful to review your guilt, sorting and letting go as you are ready.

The other side of guilt

Honour your guilt as a teacher of what you believe is right and wrong. In searching for meaning in the midst of your grief, you learn what you want to hold onto and value. You find that you grow through this experience.

ANGER

Anger is a natural reaction to frustration, powerlessness, or injustice. Angry feelings are a natural and healthy response to loss. However, anger is a difficult emotion to accept as it can be powerful and menacing, for you and for others. Socially acceptable ways to express anger are hard to find as it is not 'nice' to be angry. You may have other words for anger, saying 'I'm upset, frustrated, annoyed, cross, or disappointed.'

Your anger may be justifiable anger. It may have a target. There may be valid reasons for your anger, such as things done or not done, said or not said, by others involved in the care of the person who died or at the time of the death. Your anger may be self-directed and related to your feelings of guilt.

You may experience anger without a target or you may not want to acknowledge the target of your anger if, for example, you are angry at the person who died. This can cause free-floating anger that comes from internal pressure of intense feelings. You may find it hard to recognize as anger, yet it may show up everywhere and come out in all sorts of distressing ways. You may switch feelings (so that you cry), hold silent grudges (then worry and feel guilty), or explode without warning (overreact).

Sometimes you may use anger as a distraction or protection from feelings that you fear may overwhelm you. This is not wrong—it's just a way to have control. Anger may mask a deep emotion, hurt or injury that you are not prepared to address.

What helps

Be safe.

Take care of yourself and protect others, so that your anger does not become harmful. Learn and practise anger management. Take time out when you feel that you might lose control. Time out means walking away, literally, from whatever the situation is. Immediately. Say when you will return. You may only need a short time to calm yourself.

Defuse your anger.

Let the steam off. Physical activity that includes big muscle movement helps. Sports, such as racket sports, running, or aerobics, are a beneficial release. Repetitive actions are good: hammering, digging in the garden, cooking or baking that require chopping, kneading, or pounding. Find activities in your daily routine that help defuse your anger.

Express the feelings.

In a safe place, with no judgement, talk out the whole story. Write it or draw it, if this works better for you. Examine the details and name your feelings. Express these feelings through safe outlets. In an unsent letter, or in an 'empty chair' or taped conversation, you can talk to the person you are angry at, and say what you really feel and think. You can destroy the letter or tape afterwards. This process may put things back in perspective and help you to decide if there are things you need or want to do.

Take action.

Identify positive steps you can take to redress any wrong you perceive has been done. These might be actual or symbolic actions. For example, you might forward suggestions to someone about how your situation could have been handled better, or you might work to make changes through community service.

Relieve your tension.

Take care of yourself through relaxation; get a massage or spa treatment. Practise prayer or meditation. Talk to people who care about you and are able to hear about your struggles.

The other side of anger

Within your anger, there is energy for positive action. It arises from the same source as initiative. Personal change and growth require dynamic energy.

FEAR AND ANXIETY

Fear and anxiety are very powerful physical sensations which can include rapid shallow breathing, nervousness and agitation, upset stomach, and heart palpitations. Usually, fear is telling you to avoid or get away from some danger, but when you are grieving you may get this signal without any real danger present. Your fear may be about the future rather than the present. Fear, anxiety, and especially panic are felt in your body.

If you fear being unable to cope, not knowing how to go on, or what life will be like, you may not want to go out or face new things and new people. You may feel panicked or paralyzed. If you have too much to deal with, your fear can become generalized into nameless dread. An accumulation of fear and stress creates chronic anxiety and possibly panic attacks.

You may be afraid of the intensity of your own emotions and wonder if you are going crazy. You worry about loss of control, thinking that if you begin to express emotion you won't be able to stop.

Your fear may centre on certain persistent thoughts or memories related to the illness or death. This can be a dilemma as you avoid these memories yet fear that they may be all you have. As you move through your grief process, you will reclaim all your memories again.

It is quite common to fear illness and dying, for yourself and other family members, due to your heightened sense of mortality and sensitivity to symptoms.

What helps

Name your fear.

Stop and focus on your fear or anxiety. This is the beginning of being able to manage them. Explore what causes these feelings for you. A helpful saying: *to name it is to tame it*. Get information about whatever causes your fear, as knowledge gives you power. If you are suffering from anxiety or panic attacks, ask your doctor for help and advice.

Use problem solving strategies.

Start by asking questions like: what do I need to do now? what can I tackle later? who can help and what can they do? what resources do I have? Think small and organize things into bite size pieces. Review this process to identify what you learned and can use again. As you begin to take some control, you find that your fears begin to lift.

Identify what soothes your anxiety.

Notice what increases and decreases your anxiety—does it help to be alone or with others? Use positive self-talk, for example, *My body is responding to an emergency, and there is NO emergency. I am safe*. Make a list of what to do when you feel panicky, what helps. For example: call a designated friend; be active—go for a walk, clean the house, exercise; hang onto something—a pillow, teddy bear, an article of clothing belonging to the person who died; do something soothing—a bath, massage, yoga; practice prayer, meditation or visualization.

Breathe slowly, exhale.

Let the sensations of fear or anxiety remind you to breathe, slowly and fully. Take a big breath in and let it out with a sigh.

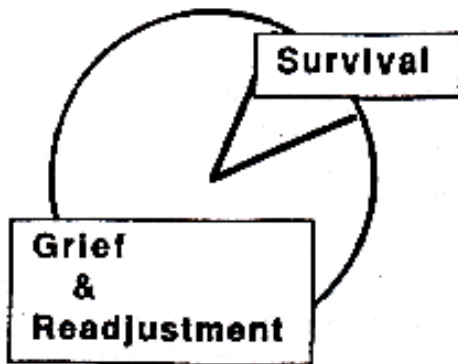
The other side of fear and anxiety

You are responding to change and ready for the challenge. There is a similarity between being anxious and being excited—heart rate up, sweating palms, dry mouth, stomach churning. Rather than tell yourself 'I am afraid', say 'I am ready.' Fear is an indicator of being at your edge, where growth can happen.

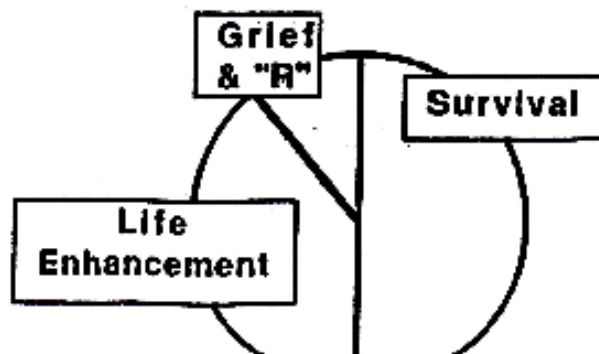
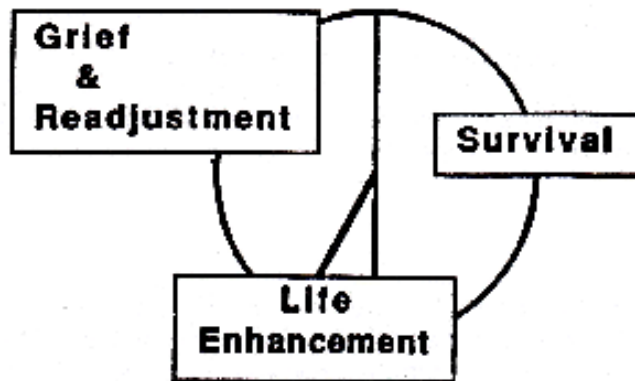
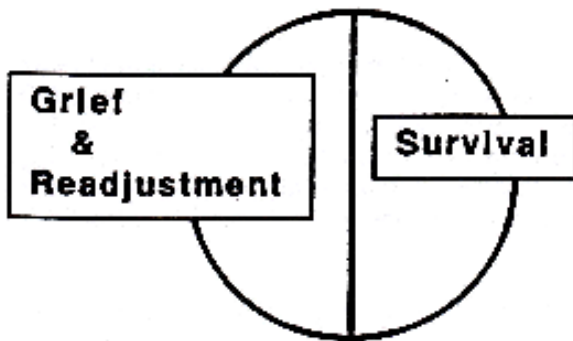
SUMMARY

Practise the strategies for coping that are given for the particular emotions. Look at the positive side of each emotion to balance its challenging aspects. There is hope for the healing of your pain, and for your journey, to bring you to a place of composure again.

GRIEF AND LOSS ENERGY MANAGEMENT MODEL



- survival
- grief and readjustment
- life enhancement



ENERGY MANAGEMENT MODEL (*Nancy Reeves, 1984*)

- After experiencing a significant loss, a person's Energy is often consumed by the process of Grief
- The Energy Management Model helps to determine an individual's progress through Grief
- Energy allows one to Think and Do and Feel. When it is used up by Grief, normal or usual patterns of thought, behaviour and feelings are disrupted.
- Comparing the amount of energy being used over time in the areas of grieving, survival and life enhancement allows one to observe progress through Grief.
- Progress is experienced in waves and fluctuation happens back and forth between circles.

Explaining the Model

First circle: Most energy is taken up with grief. You are barely surviving:

- Everything is an effort
- You drag yourself to even get dressed
- Eat very little - even need coaxing to do that

Others have to help:

- Bring in food
- Help with making funeral arrangements
- Help with chores

This may last for a few days or a few weeks or months

Second Circle: About half your time and energy is spent with grieving. You are now able to meet all your survival needs:

- You can now get through daily chores
- You can now begin to see what needs to be done
- You begin to see where you are and you don't like it

Healing will begin as you allow this process. Some encouragement and support may be necessary to continue through this process.

Third Circle: Grieving gradually lessens, leaving an empty space. You begin to long for something else to happen and life enhancement energy begins to fill this space. Sometimes, almost overnight, you feel lighter or the load lifted. Even if temporary, this lightness can be a relief.

Life enhancement energy comes in many ways:

- Reaching out, go out with a friend
- Make a special meal
- Go to the hairdresser
- Begin to think of a hobby again
- More interested, more fulfillment

Fourth Circle: Less energy is used in Grief work

- All survival needs are met
- You now have energy for life enhancement - planning for the future etc.
- A small part of your energy is still for grieving - this part may remain
- Memories are less painful
- You may experience grief bursts on special days such as anniversaries and birthdays but the wave of grief is probably less intense or is shorter in duration

By reviewing your energy level, you will know when you are ready and you have enough energy to make major decisions.

Most moves or changes can wait until you have enough energy.

Rule of thumb: if you have to force yourself to do every little thing, it could be too soon to make major decisions or changes.

DEALING WITH GRIEF

A guide to understanding your reactions

Adapted from: Grief, Dying, and Death by T. Rando.

This is not intended as a linear progression, rather as a spiral going backwards and forwards throughout the process. Not everyone will experience all of these reactions. The journey will probably take longer than most people expect.

<p>WHEN A DEATH OCCURS ... After a death, you will have feelings of shock, numbness or disbelief that this has happened. You may feel overwhelmed, panicked and experience strong physical reactions.</p> <p>Your grief task here is to understand intellectually that the death has occurred.</p>	<p>CONFRONTING THE PAIN Later, as the numbness wears off, you will begin to feel the emotional pain of grieving. The intensity of this pain may surprise and frighten you, but it is healthy and can be resolved as you live and work with it.</p> <p>Your grief task here is to acknowledge and experience your feelings and responses.</p>	<p>RE-ESTABLISH CONNECTIONS As you work through the pain of your grief, you will begin to have more energy and the desire to re-connect with the world will return.</p> <p>Your grief task here is to adjust to life without the person who died, while still remembering them; to again invest your energy in activities and relationships.</p>
---	---	---

CHECKLIST: REALITY RESPONSES OF GRIEF

<p>SOCIAL Withdrawal from others Lack of interest in others' activities Unrealistic expectations Poor judgment and relationships</p> <p>BODY Tight chest, palpitations Shortness of breath, crying, sighing Diarrhea, constipation, vomiting Lack of energy, weakness Dizziness, shivering, feeling faint Restlessness Change in appetite & sleep patterns</p> <p>FEELINGS Numb, empty, disconnected Indifference to daily activities Outrage, helplessness Relief Need to continually review the death</p> <p>THOUGHTS Confusion, sense of unreality Poor concentration, forgetfulness Denial, disbelief Daydreaming Constant thoughts about the person</p> <p>SPIRITUAL Blaming God or life Lack of meaning or direction Wanting to die/join the person who died</p>	<p>SOCIAL Continued withdrawal, lack of interest Needing company but unable to ask Rushing into new relationships Self consciousness</p> <p>BODY Tight chest, shortness of breath Panic attacks Diarrhea, constipation Restlessness, aimless activity Sharp pangs, gnawing emptiness Nightmares, vivid dreams Change in appetite and sleep patterns Experiencing symptoms of the illness</p> <p>FEELINGS Acute, conflicting, extreme Anger, sadness, guilt depression Feeling lost, overwhelmed Generalized anxiety Unrealistic fears about others or self</p> <p>THOUGHTS Forgetfulness, daydreaming, confusion Continuing denial Inability to concentrate or understand Sense of going crazy, losing reality Sense of presence of person, visitations</p> <p>SPIRITUAL Continued blaming Lack of meaning Trying to contact the person who died</p>	<p>SOCIAL More interest in others' daily affairs Ability to reach out Energy for social relationships Desire for independence resurfaces</p> <p>BODY Dreams and nightmares decrease Physical symptoms subside Appetite and digestion returns to normal Gut wrenching emptiness is less More settled sleep</p> <p>FEELINGS Emotions settle down, less extreme Feeling of coming out of the fog More peace and happiness Some guilt about how life goes on</p> <p>THOUGHTS Fewer thoughts about being crazy Increased perspective about the death Ability to remember with less pain Improved concentration</p> <p>SPIRITUAL Reconnection with religious beliefs New direction, life has meaning Acceptance that death is part of life</p>
---	---	---

WHAT HELPS

<p>To talk about the person, their death To have practical and emotional supports To make no unnecessary changes</p>	<p>To recognize the changes in your life To understand your grief and know others experience similar reactions To acknowledge and work through your emotions To take good physical and emotional care of yourself</p>	<p>To make an effort to engage in new relationships and activities To learn new roles, skills, and responsibilities To begin making choices about your future</p>
--	---	---

HINTS FOR SELF CARE

NUTRITION

Appetite and eating patterns may change during grief. You may have no appetite at all, or you may always be hungry. Food may seem tasteless and mealtimes difficult because of the 'empty chair' reminding you of someone no longer there. Enjoying food may leave you feeling guilty. Poor nutrition can cause headaches, digestive problems, feeling fatigued and rundown.

Hints for Good Nutrition

- If eating alone is difficult, try changing where you eat, or where you sit.
- If eating a big meal is impossible, eat smaller portions more often but make it sensible foods e.g. fruit, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, tuna sandwich, boiled egg, soup.
- Breakfast is the most important meal. Choose one high in protein and low in sugar. Example: milk, yogurt, whole grain cereal, bread, low fat meats, eggs.
- Protein enhances energy and concentration. Sugar causes fatigue. High fat foods can create serious heart problems. Keep healthy snacks available.

SLEEP

Your sleep patterns will probably change during grief. While most people have trouble sleeping, some do sleep more. Dreams and nightmares are also part of the grieving process, a way of "working through" tough concerns or feelings.

A Plan For Good Sleep

- Give yourself permission to sleep differently for a while
- If still awake after 20 minutes, try sitting up and reading a novel (not a grief book).
- Use your bedroom only for sleeping at night – nap elsewhere.
- Keep room temperature warm – not hot or cold.
- No caffeine for 5 hours before bedtime.
- Exercise daily – not close to bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol, heavy meals and cigarettes.
- Take 30 minutes to prepare for bedtime, establish a routine.
- Drink hot milk.
- Take a warm bath.
- Try relaxation exercises.
- Sleep with a pillow or stuffed toy.
- Try sleeping in another room temporarily.
- Redecorate/rearrange the bedroom.

You may wish to talk to your doctor about the temporary use of sleep medication to help your body re-establish a healthy sleep pattern.

GENERAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING

You may have several different physical reactions to grief and it is important to understand what is happening. Have a regular check-up and talk to your doctor if you have any concerns.

A Plan For Your Good Health

- Be careful driving – poor concentration and 'zoning' out can make it hazardous.
- Watch your nutrition – if poor, it leaves you susceptible to disease.
- Watch how your energy is expended – allow yourself to slow down.
- Regular exercise is essential – try walking even around the block.
- Be careful with drugs or alcohol. Grief is not treated with medications as they tend to mask the pain rather than help. Remember alcohol is a depressant.
- Palpitations, chest pains and shortness of breath are all normal reactions to grief however these symptoms must be checked by your doctor.

During your grieving process you can expect that:

- Your grief may take **longer** than most people think it should.
- Your grief will take more **energy** than you can imagine.
- Your grief will involve continual **changes**.
- Your grief will show itself in **all spheres** of your life: social, physical, emotional; thinking, spiritual.
- Your grief will depend upon how you **perceive** the loss.
- You will grieve for **many things**; not just the death itself.
- You may grieve for what you have lost already as well as for the future; for the **hopes, dreams and unfulfilled expectations** you may have held.
- Your grief will involve a wide variety of **feelings** and **reactions**: some expected and some not.
- Your loss may **resurrect** old issues, feelings and unresolved conflicts from the past.
- You may have some **identity confusion and doubts**; questioning your self worth, abilities and your new role in the world.
- You may have a combination of **anger and depression**; irritability, frustration, intolerance.
- You may feel some form of **guilt**.
- You may experience spasms, waves or acute **upsurges** of grief that occur without warning.
- You may find yourself **forgetful** and have trouble thinking, concentrating, making decisions.
- You may feel like you are **going crazy**.
- You may be obsessed with the death or **preoccupied** with thoughts of the dead person.
- You may search for meaning in/for your life and question your **beliefs**.
- Society may have **unrealistic expectations** about your mourning and may respond inappropriately.
- Certain dates, events, seasons and reminders may bring **upsurges** in your grief.
- Certain experiences in the future may resurrect intense grief feelings for you.

Adapted from: "Grieving: How to go on Living When Someone You Love Dies" T. Rando