



Understanding Grief

Forever has it been known that love knows not its own depth until the hour of separation.
– Kahlil Gibran

Everyone experiences loss and grief in their own way. Over many years of working with individuals and families experiencing great loss, our Grief Counselors have seen a wide range of reactions. You may be experiencing some combination of numbness, sadness, relief, guilt, gratitude, anger, anxiety, a myriad of emotions. Your feelings may come and go. At times you may feel overwhelmed, other times mostly “normal.” You may be crying a lot, finding it difficult to cry, or not feeling a need to cry.

It is common for grief to affect us physically, such as in difficulty with sleep, eating, fatigue, low energy, muscle weakness, and gastrointestinal disturbance. You may for a time lose interest in things you normally enjoy. You may feel like withdrawing from others, or you may find it difficult to be alone. All of these different reactions are normal and resolve in time. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to grieve.

Please be patient with yourself, and know that whether you’re feeling overwhelmed with grief, mostly at peace, or anywhere in between, you can trust that it probably makes perfect sense and you’re exactly where you should be, as difficult as it may be.

Here are some other thoughts you might find helpful:

Healing from loss is more of a roller coaster ride than a straight line. There are no fixed “stages” to go through. Others who may be grieving the same loss will likely be doing it in their own way. It is okay (and important) for you to do it in your own way.

Grief, as difficult as it can be, is a natural response to major loss. But healing is also natural. It takes time, often longer than we expect. But know that gradually the hurt will ease and you’ll settle into a new normal.

Basic self-care is especially important now. Though you may not always succeed, try to rest adequately, eat a balanced diet and get regular exercise. If you drink, be wise about it. Use medications only as prescribed by your doctor.

If possible, avoid making other big changes in your life right away. This early on, one’s judgment in decision-making can be clouded by grief.

You may often experience short-lasting but intense “waves” of grief that seem to come out of nowhere, overwhelm you for seconds or minutes, and then pass. This is normal. If this happens to you, it’s best to just breathe through the emotions without trying to either avoid or cling to them.

Above all, be gentle and patient with yourself.

A free resource provided by Alive Hospice

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