

Understanding the Reaction of Others

A feeling that everyone else is carrying on with “life as usual.”

At this time in your life, the world looks different: callous, cold, dull, frightening, indifferent, uncaring, and unreal.

You may find yourself surprised and hurt that, despite the fact that your life has totally changed, the rest of the world appears to operate just as it always has.

A common, but unexpected feeling among bereaved people is their wish to say to the world, “Hey everybody, don’t you understand that my life has been turned upside down and that everything is different?”

Even those people who know you well will not understand some of your grief reactions. You may find that you will receive support from some of the people around you during the first few months after the death. But, after a while most of these people will want to see you as “over” your loss. This is a common reaction by people in our society partly because they are afraid that you might “hang onto your grief too long.”

Suggestions:

Recognize that the special relationship you had with your loved one cannot be totally understood by anyone. There are, however, people who can understand some of what you are going through. There are many grieving individuals like you who are experiencing similar reactions.

Despite the feeling that the “world goes on” while you are still hurting, remember that it is likely there are people who care and can listen to you. On the other hand, be ready for some of the awkward things that well-meaning people say to you:

“You’ll get over it.”

“I know how you feel.”

“Don’t worry.”

“Count your blessings.”

“Life goes on.”

Remember, they are looking for words that they hope might ease your pain and they are not sure what else to say. Try to bear with them. Find ways to get the kind of support you need. If the persons you ask cannot give you support, continue to ask others until you get what you need.

Source: A Guide for the Bereaved Survivor by Robert Baugher, Ph.D. & Marc Calija