

What You May Experience as a Newly Bereaved Person

Grief can bring a wide range of emotions and physical symptoms.

- Profound sadness.
- Crying all the time or at unexpected times.
- Extreme physical exhaustion, or a manic energy.
- Difficulty sleeping, or sleeping all the time.
- Lack of appetite, or over eating, often accompanied by weight loss or weight gain.
- Anxiety, often manifested in overprotective behavior toward surviving family members.
- Denial of the loss.
- Inability to concentrate, frequently misplacing items and forgetting things.
- A deep longing and emptiness, feeling that nothing has meaning.
- Intense questioning: "Why??" "If only I had....?" "Why didn't I...?"
- Looking for blame, and blaming yourself or others.
- Anger with yourself, family members, medical personnel, God, even the deceased.
- Fearing that you are mentally ill or unstable.
- Physical symptoms such as heaviness in your chest, difficulty breathing, tightness in your throat, yawning, sighing, gasping or even hyperventilating (do not hesitate to see a doctor for symptoms that concern you).
- Inability to function at work.
- Increased intensity of, or sudden loss of, religious faith.
- Wanting to die (a feeling that usually subsides over time as you realize the value of staying present for other loved ones).
- Needing to tell and retell the story of your loved one's death.
- Sensing the presence of your loved one in an odor or touch.
- Difficulty in everyday tasks that remind you of your loved one, such as seeing his or her favorite foods on the shelves when grocery shopping.
- Anger with yourself if you smile or laugh, and wondering how you can feel happy when your loved one is dead.
- Feeling as though your spouse or other family members don't understand your grief or are not grieving as you think they should.
- Losing old friends who don't seem to understand your pain and grief.
- Making new connections with people who have also experienced the death of a child, sibling, or grandchild.
- Feeling "stuck" in an aspect of grief such as denial or anger.
- Feeling as though your work through grief is "one step forward, two steps back" or proceeding in a completely random way.
- Frustration with others who expect you to be "over this" in a specific time frame – perhaps even frustration with yourself if you feel you should have "moved on."