

# Types of Grief and Loss

## Anticipatory Mourning

When a person or family is expecting death, it is normal to begin to anticipate how one will react and cope when that person eventually dies. Many family members will try to envision their life without that person and mentally play out possible scenarios, which may include grief reactions and ways they will mourn and adjust after the death.

Anticipatory mourning includes feelings of loss, concern for the dying person, balancing conflicting demands and preparing for death. Anticipatory mourning is a natural process that enables the family more time to slowly prepare for the reality of the loss. People are often able to complete unfinished “business” with the dying person (for example, saying “good-bye,” “I love you,” or “I forgive you”).

## Sudden Loss

Grief experienced after a sudden, unexpected death is different from anticipatory mourning. Sudden, unexpected loss may exceed the coping abilities of a person, which often results in feelings of being overwhelmed and/or unable to function. Even though one may be able to acknowledge that loss has occurred, the full impact of loss may take much longer to fully comprehend than in the case of an expected loss.

## Complicated Grief

There are times when grief does not progress as expected; the intensity and duration of grief is prolonged and dramatically interferes with a person’s ability to function. Symptoms of depression and anxiety may be prevalent and prolonged. Thoughts, feelings, behaviors and reactions may seem to persist over long periods of time with little change or improvement. In these situations, it is important to seek help from a qualified professional who can assess your individual situation and make recommendations that will help. It is important to seek help; complicated grief does not subside on its own.