

HOSPICE *of the* VALLEY

Bereavement Literature

GRIEF: THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE

Grief is a natural and normal reaction to loss – loss of any kind. It is a physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological response. The death of a loved one is perhaps the most devastating loss one may experience. Yet, grief occurs following any change in our lives. Even positive changes can bring a momentary grief response.

Grief is a complex process, guided by our past experiences, our religious beliefs, our socio-economic situation, our physical health and the cause of the loss. Love, anger, fear, frustration, loneliness and guilt are all part of grief. It is important to understand that grief is not a sign of weakness nor a lack of faith. Grief is the price we pay for love.

Grieving may cause physical and behavioral changes such as sleep irregularities, changes in appetite, gastrointestinal disturbances, heartache, restlessness, spontaneous crying, irritability, sighing or muscle tension.

Anger and guilt are common emotions. You may feel angry with God, your spouse, your children, or with others either involved or totally separate from the death. You may be angry with yourself. Guilt feelings often accompany or follow anger. You may want to withdraw and be left alone.

Depression, feelings of emptiness or hollowness may temporarily overcome you. You may experience headaches, tightness in the throat or chest, muscle aches, or a burning sensation in your stomach. Grief hurts. You may, for a while, become preoccupied with images of your loved one. You may “see” or sense your loved one’s presence. You may begin to wonder if you are going crazy.

You can help yourself through grief:

- Acknowledge the loss.
- Accept the pain of grief. Try to live *through* it, not avoid it.
- Share your thoughts and feelings. Find enough compassionate listeners. You can talk more than one person can listen!
- Understand that each person has an individual time table for grief. Each person grieves separately and differently. We each move through grief at our own pace.
- Find your sense of humor. Try to hang onto it!
- Get some physical exercise. If nothing else, jog your memory.
- Learn to hug again.
- Accept yourself. Begin to understand you are someone new. Acknowledge that change.
- Begin to become the person you already are.
- Remember, though death comes, *love never goes away*.

-Darcie D. Sims, in *The Empty Chair*