



HOSPICE
of the VALLEY

Family and Caregiver Education

BEREAVEMENT

Natural and Normal Grief Responses

Grieving over the loss of a loved one is very painful and at times can seem overwhelming. Many of us wonder whether we are grieving in the “right” way and worry whether the feelings being experienced are “normal.”

Here are some of the more common responses which you may encounter now and for the coming months:

- Feeling emotionally numb.
- Having difficulty believing that the death has really happened.
- Feeling tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest or in the pit of one’s stomach.
- Having a loss of appetite or a desire to eat more than usual.
- Having a desire to smoke, drink or use drugs (especially tranquilizers) in a greater amount than before.
- Feeling restless and looking for activity and finding it difficult to concentrate and complete tasks.
- Having difficulty sleeping, waking early and often dreaming of your loved one.
- Feeling exhausted and lacking in energy.
- Feeling low at times of birthdays, holidays and special occasions.
- Spending money on things usually not purchased.
- Feeling preoccupied with financial concerns.
- Telling and retelling things about your loved one and the experience of his or her death.
- Talking things over with the deceased person.
- Feeling mood changes over the slightest things; crying unexpectedly.
- Feeling guilty for what was said or not said, or for not having done enough for your loved one.
- Being angry or irritated at the wrong person, or the wrong circumstance or at the world.
- Feeling angry at your loved one for leaving you.
- Having difficulty making decisions on your own.
- Sensing your loved one’s presence, believing you hear his/her voice, or expecting him or her to come back.
- Experiencing an intense preoccupation with the life of the deceased.
- Assuming mannerisms or traits of your loved one.
- Feeling as though life doesn’t have any meaning.
- Feeling self-pity and not feeling needed.

These are natural and normal grief responses. Crying and expressing your feelings to others is necessary and helpful. Accepting responsibility for moving through your pain is an important step in the process of healing.

Steve Averill, *Grief and the Healing Process: Understanding Our Losses* © 1993, 2003

Counseling and Support Services

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