

Grief and Loss



Coping with grief and loss

Losing someone close to us can be extremely difficult. We often experience a range of intense emotions, which may come and go in waves. However, understanding that our reactions are a normal part of grieving can be comforting. Although everyone reacts to loss differently, in this handout are some commonly reported reactions to loss, some useful concepts to keep in mind, as well as coping suggestions that people have found to be helpful when going through the grieving process.

Common reactions

- › Shock and denial
- › Anger
- › Blaming
- › Guilt
- › Grief and sadness
- › Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
- › Physical reactions

The grieving process

The important thing to remember about the grieving process is that it does not happen in linear stages, as if you must experience and work through each one. It is different for everyone; as unique as a fingerprint. However, there are four tasks that most people work through during the grieving process.

- › Accept that the loss has happened.
- › Take time to explore and express your feelings related to the loss - this may include episodes of intense anger, guilt, sadness, etc.

- › Adjust to a world without that person - mentally, emotionally, and physically.
- › Form a new life and relationships, while still maintaining a connection with the one you lost.

Tips for coping with grief

- › Take your time. Don't judge or measure your reactions by those of others.
- › Talk. Share your feelings and the meaning this loss has for you.
- › Pay attention to your body's needs. Exercise (according to your doctor's recommendations) and balanced nutrition are essential.
- › Surround yourself with friends and family who support you. Avoid isolating.
- › Tears may come unexpectedly and at times when you thought you were finished grieving. Be patient with yourself. Their intensity and frequency should diminish with time.
- › Allow yourself time to grieve as well as giving yourself breaks from grieving.
- › If you follow a religious faith, this can be a time for prayer and quiet meditation. Seek out your faith mentors.
- › Avoid alcohol and other mind-altering substances.
- › Learn to be sensitive and flexible with your new needs and lifestyle.
- › Be kind to yourself.