Experiencing Grief

Grief is the natural response to losing someone or something that was deeply important or meaningful to you. It affects emotions, thoughts, and behaviors and can be a reaction to many different types of loss. Although typically associated with the death of a loved one, grief can also result from a divorce, job loss, being separated from friends and family, or any life-changing experience in which one feels profound loss.

Normal Reactions To the Loss

Although everyone expresses grief in a different way, some reactions are common and quite normal overall. The physical symptoms of grief may manifest as difficulty breathing or sleeping, changes in energy or eating, dryness of the mouth, nausea, confusion, or crying. Emotionally, grief might be expressed as anger towards a person or a situation, or guilt at the things one did or didn’t do to precipitate or prevent the loss. Some people withdraw from family, friends, and their ordinary routine during times of grief or mourning. Grief can also influence a person’s mental outlook, causing them to feel numb or empty, have difficulty focusing, or experience doubts and new developments in their spiritual views or their attitude towards life in general.

Grief Doesn’t Just Go Away

As the process of grieving unfolds, some feelings and symptoms will come and go, and others will continue for weeks, months, or possibly years. Grieving goes on for as long as it takes to readjust to the new circumstances of your life, and accept the
loss and its effect on your life.

The Experience

While grieving, it is important to accept whatever emotional and mental experiences accompany the process. Be patient with yourself as you readjust to a new set of life circumstances after the loss.

Talking About It

It’s perfectly normal for grieving people to want to express their feelings and share their stories. Reaching out to friends, family, hospice staff, a support group, or other counseling can help.

Forgiveness

Feelings of guilt or anger that can come up while grieving are best met with forgiveness. Always forgive yourself when these emotions arise, whether in response to what you have done or perhaps the things you didn’t do.

Diet and Exercise

Grief is physical as well as emotional, and diet and exercise can help you maintain balance during this difficult time. Exercise in particular can help with low energy feelings that are sometimes part of grief.

Take Care of Yourself

This could be as simple as listening to music that makes you feel good, watching or reading something that stimulates you, or anything else that provides comforts and distraction.
Be Mindful and Prepared for Important Dates

Holidays, anniversaries, and other special occasions can be especially triggering after an important loss. Plan these events so that you can acknowledge these feelings and spend them with people whom you trust and make you feel comfortable.

How Will I Know When It’s Over?

In some ways the grieving process is never really “over,” but experiencing and accepting your feelings can help you readjust to what is different in your life after a loss.