



## Symptoms of Grief

Most people who suffer a loss experience common emotional, physical, behavioral and spiritual reactions. Identifying these symptoms is a way of letting you know what you are feeling is normal. Do not expect to suffer from all of the symptoms or any of them for long periods of time. Should you suffer from a large number of symptoms for several months, please talk with a Care Initiatives Hospice Bereavement Counselor.

### Emotional Reactions to Grief

**Sadness** - The most common feeling associated with grief.

**Shock and numbness** - Initially, most people feel nothing. You simply go through the motions of everyday life.

**Anger** - You feel anger at doctors, God, the "system", friends, other family members or yourself. You may be angry with the loved one for leaving.

**Frustration** - There is nothing that can be done. It is final.

**Denial** - Death does not feel real. You deny that the death occurred.

**Guilt** - Doubts surface. Did the doctors miss something? If only I had... Guilt surfaces over what was not said or what was said.

**Emotional distancing** - It is too painful to be around others or you feel out of place. Staying home is the easy way out.

**Irrational thoughts** - Thoughts of joining the dead person.

**Lack of interest** - Participation in former interests takes too much energy.

**Relief** - Your loved one no longer suffers. You are no longer a caregiver.

**Relationship difficulties** - Grief can strain relationships.

**Anxiety or feelings of panic** - You feel restless and afraid.

**Irritability** - Difficulty being patient dominates your mood.

**Lack of confidence** - You can't do the things you used to do.

**Shame** - Death from suicide or as a result of criminal activity causes you to feel shame.

**Envy of other families** - You feel envy or jealousy when you see or experience others with what you lost. *"That family still has a mom and dad, and now I have neither."*

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**Inability to cope** - Unable to deal with other's jokes, laughter or complaints

**Physical Reactions to Grief**.....

General sense of fatigue or weakness	Changes in appetite, typically loss of appetite
Shortness of breath or tightness in the chest	Weight loss
Dry mouth	Hair loss
Heavy sighs	Crying
Feelings of tension	Lightheadedness or dizziness
Pain in the stomach, back, head, etc	Pounding or racing heartbeat
Lack of muscular strength	Sensation of choking or difficulty breathing
Changes in sleep patterns	Feeling "jumpy" and sensitive

**If you experience any physical reaction to grief for a period of time,  
please seek medical care from a doctor or emergency room.**

**Behavioral Reactions to Grief**.....

Loss of appetite	Aimlessly wandering
Insomnia	Intense need to care and protect others
Socially retreating	Difficulty concentrating
Crying	Restlessness
Absentmindedness	Inability to complete tasks
Dreams or nightmare about the deceased	Intense preoccupation with the deceased
Calling out or talking to the deceased	Mood swings
Treasuring or avoiding mementos of the deceased	Assuming the deceased's mannerisms or speech patterns
Hallucinations of the deceased or sensing his or her presence	Avoiding conversation about the death experience to avoid others' discomfort
Not attending formerly enjoyable social functions	Need to tell and retell stories about the deceased and the death experience

**Spiritual Reactions to Grief**.....

Loss of faith, questioning previous beliefs	Using faith for strength during grieving
Openness to the spiritual world	Discovery of faith or spiritual understanding
Feelings of connectedness or communication with the deceased	Questioning the meaning of life without the deceased
Asking "Why?", "Why them?", "Why me?"	Asking about life after death or heaven

**References**

Web sites [www.funeralplan.com/griefsupport](http://www.funeralplan.com/griefsupport), [www.journeyofhearts.org](http://www.journeyofhearts.org), [www.hospicenet.org](http://www.hospicenet.org)