



Care
Initiatives

Hospice

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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Continued....

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

Physical Reactions to Grief.....

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|---|---|
| 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.....

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| 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.....

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| 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, www.journeyofhearts.org, www.hospicenet.org