

GRIEF

Grief is a deep, raw, emotional wound caused by a loss. The loss can be loss of a dream, loss of trust, loss of physical capability, loss of a relationship/love, etc. The intensity of the grief will depend on the extent of the loss. Grief is normal, natural, inevitable and probably the hardest work you will ever do. The wound will eventually heal, but there will always be a scar. Healing takes TIME. There is no timetable – everyone is different. Grief may last from a few months to several years, But **YOU WILL GET BETTER.**

STAGES OF GRIEF:

1. **Denial** – Shock, disbelief: the unthinkable has happened. It can't be. Often there is numbness at first. You simply cannot feel the full impact; your body protects you as it gradually sinks in.
2. **Anger** – Eventually the reality hits hard. You begin to feel the pain, the awful anguish, depression, hurt. You become angry. It's not **FAIR**. Why? Why? You're angry with others and with yourself. You may want to strike out and blame someone; to punish. It is important to acknowledge these feelings without acting on them.
3. **Bargaining** – You may try to change the unchangeable – perhaps try to “bargain” with God. “I will change, I will be different, I will do anything if only things can be the way I want.”
4. **Acceptance** – Finally you will learn to accept. You begin to go on and rebuild. There will always be sadness at times but now you know you will make it.

SYMPTOMS

Preoccupation: With the loss. It's all you can think about. You can't concentrate.

Anxiety/panic: At the thought of loss of control in the circumstances.

Depression: Sadness, apathy. If it is prolonged, get professional help.

Guilt: The “if onlys” and the “what ifs”; “It's all my fault.”

Lowered Self-Esteem: Loss of affirmation, loss of meaning in our lives.

Helplessness: We cannot “snap out of it.”

Hatred/Blame/Resentment: Natural but uncomfortable feelings.

Physical Symptoms: Weakness, headaches, intestinal problems, insomnia, etc.

WHAT TO DO

1. **LEAN INTO YOUR PAIN.** Admit and feel your feelings. Go through the pain. It is impossible to go around it. Feelings will keep re-surfacing. Talk out your pain. Cry out your pain. Write out your pain (a journal often helps). Exercise out your pain.
2. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP.** We all need help at times. Accept it when it is offered and ask when friends and family do not know how or what you need. Often just having a listener helps. Perhaps try a group or counseling.
3. **BE GOOD TO YOURSELF.** Pamper yourself. Be patient with yourself. Don't expect too much of yourself or take on too much responsibility. Get plenty of rest and good nutrition. Treat yourself to dinner, a movie a good book. Be as gentle on yourself as you would be with a friend who is grieving.