



Bereavement

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the impact of loss/grieving process?

When a loved one/friend dies, there is a grieving process. Recovery is a slow and emotionally painful one. The grieving process can be less painful if you try to understand that loss and grief is a natural part of life. Learn to accept your loss and believe in yourself. Believe that you can cope with tragic happenings. Let your experience be a psychological growth process that will help you to deal with future stressful events. The grieving process usually consists of the following stages. Note that not everyone goes through all these stages.

Denial and Shock

At first, it may be difficult for you to accept your own dying or the death of a loved one/friend. As a result you will deny the reality of death. However, this denial will gradually diminish as you begin to express and share your feelings about death and dying with other family/friends.

Anger

During this stage the most common question asked is "why me?". You are angry at what you perceive to be the unfairness of death and you may project and displace your anger onto others. When given some social support and respect, you will eventually become less angry and able to move into the next stage of grieving.

Bargaining

Many individuals try to bargain with some sort of deity. They probably try to bargain and offer to give up an enjoyable part of their lives in exchange for the return of health or the lost person.

Guilt

You may find yourself feeling guilty for things you did or didn't do prior to the loss. Forgive yourself. Accept your humanness.

Depression

You may at first experience a sense of great loss. Mood fluctuations and feelings of isolation and withdrawal may follow. It takes time for you, the grieving student, to gradually return to your old self and become socially involved in what's going on around you.

Loneliness

As you go through changes in your social life because of the loss, you may feel lonely and afraid. The more you are able to reach out to others and make new friends, the more this feeling lessens.

Acceptance

Acceptance does not mean happiness. Instead you accept and deal with the reality of the situation.

Hope

Eventually you will reach a point where remembering will be less painful and you can begin to look ahead to the future and more good times.

What can I do to cope with death and dying?

- Discuss feelings such as loneliness, anger, and sadness openly and honestly with family members and/or friends.
- Maintain hope.
- If your religious convictions are important to you, talk to a member of the clergy about your beliefs and feelings.
- Participate in a grief support group.
- Take good care of yourself. Eat well-balanced meals. Get plenty of rest.
- Be patient with yourself. It takes time to heal. Some days will be better than others.

How long will I grieve?

Although there are no timetables for determining when grieving is over, many experts agree that it is not unusual for the mourning process to take at least a year. Of course this varies depending on your relationship with the deceased, amount of support, and other personal factors.

Remember it takes about a year to go through all of the birthdays, holidays, special events, and other important dates that will be experienced for the first time without the loved one. Though the intensity of the loss may ebb and flow during this period of time, grief lasting for at least a year is not uncommon and can be expected. Generally, the longer a close relationship had existed before the death, the longer the recovery process takes.

What can I do to help myself while grieving?

Here are some things others have found useful in their healthy grieving. Choose the ones that fit for you, or make up your own methods of self-care. Remember that grieving is an active process, it takes energy that will likely have to be temporarily withdrawn from the usual pursuits of your life. Treat yourself with the same care, tolerance, and affection you would extend to a valued friend in a similar situation.

- Go gently -- take whatever time it needs, rather than giving yourself a deadline for when you should be "over it"
- Expect and accept some reduction in your usual efficiency and consistency
- Try to avoid taking on new responsibilities or making major life decisions for a time
- Talk regularly about your grief and your memories with someone you trust
- Accept help and support when offered
- Be particularly attentive to maintaining healthy eating and sleeping patterns
- Exercise moderately and regularly
- Keep a journal
- Read -- there are many helpful books on grief; some are listed below. If grief is understood it is easier to handle
- Plan, and allow yourself to enjoy without guilt, some GOOD TIMES. The goal is balance, not martyrdom
- Carry or wear a linking object -- a keepsake that symbolically reminds you of your loss. Anticipate the time in the future when you no longer need to carry this reminder and gently let it go
- Tell those around you what helps you and what doesn't. Most people would like to help if they knew how
- Take warm, leisurely baths
- See a grief counselor
- Get a massage regularly
- Set aside a specific private time daily to remember and experience whatever feelings arise with the memories
- Choose your entertainment carefully -- some movies, TV shows, or books can only over-intensify already strong feelings
- Join a support group -- there are hundreds of such groups and people have a wonderful capacity to help each other
- Plan for 'special days' such as holidays or anniversaries. Feelings can be particularly intense at these times
- Pray
- Take a yoga class
- Connect on the Internet. There are many resources for people in grief, as well as opportunities to chat with fellow grievers
- Vent your anger in healthy ways, rather than holding it in. A brisk walk or a game of tennis can help
- Speak to a member of the clergy
- Plant yourself in nature
- Do something to help someone else