

Grief and Loss

“OUR GRIEVING IS AS
INDIVIDUAL AS OUR LIVES”
– ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS



What is Grief?

Grief is a natural way we learn to live without someone we cared about after their death.

Grief can be intense and uncomfortable. We sometimes try to avoid our grieving through distractions and keeping busy.

GRIEF ACROSS CULTURES:

You may have unique cultural beliefs and rituals around death and grief. This may include how to handle the deceased person's body.

It is important to let staff know about these beliefs and rituals so they can honour them.

It may help to talk to a spiritual or cultural leader to discuss common practices in your culture or religion.

For more information, please visit:

www.virtualhospice.ca
advancecareplanning.ca
www.speakupontario.ca





Reactions to Grief:

There is no “right” way to grieve.

Common reactions following the death of a friend or a relative may include:

PHYSICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS:

- Low appetite
- Poor sleep
- Difficulty focusing
- Low energy
- Seeing or hearing the person who has died

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS:

- Anger
- Intense sadness
- Numbness
- Anxiety
- Relief

SOCIAL REACTIONS:

- Social withdrawal
- Lack of enjoyment
- Longing for the person who has died



What if I am More Relieved than Sad?

You have dealt with many losses before your relative or friend died such as:

- Seeing their health decline
- Watching them age
- Selling a family home
- Living separately from them

Given this, you may **initially** feel relief for a “timely” death and an end to your relative or friend’s suffering.

With time however, the absence of your relative or friend will likely settle in. This may lead to many of the reactions described under “Reactions to Grief”.

How Long Do People Grieve?

People can feel profound grief for six months and up to two years.

DURING THIS TIME, YOU MAY HAVE:

- Bad days, where you have low energy and are just trying to get through the day
- Good days, where you have more energy and feel positive

Having a bad day after just starting to feel better does not mean you are slipping back into intense grief. Overtime, the good days then to outweigh the bad days.



Planning Ahead

Grief may resurface suddenly, even when you feel you are adjusting to life without your relative or friend. This often happens during holidays, events and anniversaries.

Being prepared for these periods, can help you cope better when they happen.

YOU MAY WANT TO:

- Plan to be with close family or friends
- Plan a ritual to honour the person who has died
- Take time for yourself

Taking Care of Yourself

It is important to take care of yourself while you grieve:

- Spend time with your family and friends: This will help prevent isolation and provide support to you in coping with your loss
- Reach out for help and support: Specially right after your relative or friend's death.

Your health is important too. If you are feeling overwhelmed, seek support from your health care provider and from the Family Councils of Ontario www.fco.ngo (416) 487-4355 or 1-888-283-8806.

Reaching Out for Help

Sometimes our feelings of grief are overwhelming. These feelings may give us trouble in our daily lives.

AFTER 6 MONTHS, YOU MAY WANT TO SEEK HELP IF:

- Your interest in life has not returned
- You see no hope for the future
- You are preoccupied with anger or guilt

Refer to the pamphlet *Resources for Bereavement, Grief and Loss* to learn about services and resources to help you understand and cope with your grief.

Refer to the pamphlet *What to Do After a Death* for a list of formalities you may need to complete following the death of a family member or a friend.

ON July 2021

Online Resources

1. See SPA-LTC website for more resources
www.spaltc.ca/resource-library/

Contact Us

Strengthening Palliative Approach
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