

Dealing With Grief

Life After Loss

Loss is an inevitable part of life, and grief is a natural part of the healing process. The reasons for grief are many, such as the loss of a loved one, the loss of health, or the letting go of a long-held dream. Dealing with a significant loss can be one of the most difficult times in a person's life.

Different Kinds of Loss

Feelings of loss are very personal, and only you know what is significant to you. People commonly associate certain losses with strong feelings of grief. These can include:

- Loss of a close friend
- Death of a partner
- Death of a classmate or colleague
- Serious illness of a loved one
- Relationship breakup
- Death of a family member

Subtle or less obvious losses can also cause strong feelings of grief, even though those around you may not know the extent of your feelings. Some examples include:

- Leaving home
- Illness/loss of health
- Death of a pet
- Change of job
- Move to a new home
- Graduation from school
- Loss of a physical ability
- Loss of financial security

Sudden versus Predictable Loss

Sudden or shocking losses due to events like crimes, accidents, or suicide can be traumatic. There is no way to prepare. They can challenge your sense of security and confidence in the predictability of life. You may experience symptoms such as sleep disturbance, nightmares, distressing thoughts, depressed mood, social

isolation, or severe anxiety.

Predictable losses, like those due to terminal illness, sometimes allow more time to prepare for the loss.

However, they create two layers of grief: the grief related to the anticipation of the loss and the grief related to the loss itself.

How Long Does Grief Last?

The length of the grief process is different for everyone. There is no predictable schedule for grief.

Although it

can be quite painful at times, the grief process should not be rushed. It is important to be patient with yourself as

you experience your unique reactions to the loss. With time and support, things generally do get better.

However, it is normal for significant dates, holidays, or other reminders to trigger feelings related to the loss.

Taking care of yourself, seeking support, and acknowledging your feelings during these times are ways that can help you cope.

Normal Grief Reactions

When experiencing grief, it is common to:

- Feel like you are “going crazy”
- Have difficulty concentrating
- Feel sad or depressed
- Be irritable or angry (at the deceased, oneself, others, higher powers)
- Feel frustrated or misunderstood
- Experience anxiety, nervousness, or fearfulness
- Feel like you want to “escape”
- Experience guilt or remorse
- Be ambivalent
- Feel numb
- Lack energy and motivation

Grief as a Process of Healing

It is important to note that the grief process is not linear, but is more often experienced in cycles.

Grief is

sometimes compared to climbing a spiral staircase where things can look and feel like you are just going in

circles, yet you are actually making progress. Being patient with the process and allowing yourself to have any

feelings about the loss can help. If you feel stuck in your grief, talking to a counselor or a supportive person

may help you move forward in the healing process.

Taken from UCONN Counseling Service Website

<http://counseling.uconn.edu/dealing-with-grief/>