



When someone important to you dies, you grieve.

This means you experience a wide range of reactions over an extended period of time. Due to the intensity of these reactions, you may find yourself feeling frightened and overwhelmed; this is quite normal.

You may be tempted to avoid the pain of grief by not thinking about it, always being busy, or rushing into new relationships.

The only way to successfully deal with your grief is to acknowledge, understand and work through it.

When you are grieving it helps to know what to expect. This checklist outlines thoughts, feelings and reactions that are a necessary part of grief. Your experiences may not match everything listed here, but you should find a number of similarities.

You will get lots of well-intentioned advice, but it is important to grieve in your own way and your own time. Your grief will reflect your own particular relationship with the person who has died.

*(Used with permission of Victoria Hospice Society)*

## **EASTERN COUNTIES BEREAVEMENT SERVICES**

Bereaved Families of Ontario  
613-936-1455

Tri-County Mental Health Services  
1-800-465-8061  
613-932-9940

Hawkesbury General Hospital  
613-632-1111 ext. 355

Centre Royal Comtois  
613-632-0139

Sante mentale  
613- 446-5139  
1- 800- 267 -1453

Dundas County Hospice  
613- 535- 2215

## **A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING YOUR REACTIONS**



# Dealing with Grief

*Brochure prepared by the Champlain  
Palliative and End of Life Care Network  
Bereavement Working Group*

## LORS D'UN DÉCÈS...

After the death you will have feelings of shock, numbness or disbelief that this has happened. You may feel over-whelmed, panicked and experience strong physical reactions.

Your **grief task** is to understand intellectually that the death really has occurred.

## CONFRONTING THE PAIN...

Later, as the numbness wears off, you will begin to feel the emotional pain of grieving. The intensity of this pain may surprise and frighten you, but it is healthy and can be resolved as you live and work with it.

Your **grief task** is to acknowledge and experience your feelings.

## RE-ESTABLISHING CONNECTIONS...

As you work through the pain of your grief, you will begin to have more energy and the desire to re-connect with the world.

Your **grief task** is to adjust to a life without the person who died: to re-invest your energy in

## CHECKLIST: HEALTHY RESPONSES TO GRIEF

### SOCIAL

- withdrawal from others
- lack of interest in other's activities
- unrealistic expectations
- poor judgement about relationships

### BODY

- tight chest, palpitations
- shortness of breath, crying, sighing
- diarrhea, constipation, vomiting
- lack of energy, weakness, rigidity
- dizziness, shivering, faintness
- restlessness
- change in appetite & sleep patterns

### FEELINGS

- feeling numb, empty, disconnected
- indifference to daily activities
- outrage, helplessness
- need to continually review the death

### THOUGHTS

- confusion, sense of unreality
- poor concentration, forgetfulness
- denial, disbelief
- daydreaming
- constant thoughts about the person

### SPIRITUAL

- blaming God or life
- lack of meaning or direction
- wanting to die to join the dead person

### WHAT HELPS

- to talk about the person and their death
- to have practical and emotional supports available
- to make no unnecessary changes

### SOCIAL

- continued withdrawal, lack of interest
- needing company but unable to ask
- rushing into new relationships
- self-consciousness

### BODY

- tight chest, shortness of breath
- diarrhea, constipation
- restlessness, aimless activity
- sharp pangs, gnawing emptiness
- nightmares, vivid dreams
- change in appetite and sleep patterns
- experiencing symptoms of the illness

### FEELINGS

- feelings are acute, conflicting and extreme
- anger, sadness, guilt, depression
- feeling lost, overwhelmed
- generalized anxiety
- unrealistic fears about others or self

### THOUGHTS

- forgetfulness, daydreaming, confusion, continuing denial
- inability to concentrate or understand sense of going crazy
- losing touch with reality sense of presence of the person, visitations

### SPIRITUAL

- continued blaming
- lack of meaning
- trying to contact the dead person

### WHAT HELPS

- to recognize the changes in your life
- to understand your grief and know others experience the same reactions
- to acknowledge and work through your emotions
- to take good physical and emotional care of yourself

### SOCIAL

- more interest in other's daily affairs
- ability to reach out
- energy for social relationships
- desire for independence re-surfaces

### BODY

- dreams and nightmares decrease
- physical symptoms subside
- appetite returns to normal
- gut-wrenching emptiness is gone
- more settled sleep

### FEELINGS

- emotions settle down, less extreme
- feeling of coming out of the fog
- more peace and happiness
- some guilt about how life goes on

### THOUGHTS

- fewer thoughts of being crazy
- increased perspective about the death
- ability to remember with less pain
- improved concentration

### SPIRITUAL

- reconnection with religious beliefs
- new direction, life has meaning
- acceptance that death is part of life

### WHAT HELPS

- to make an effort to engage in new relationships and activities
- to learn new roles, skills and responsibilities
- to begin making choices about your future

*Adapted from: Grief, Dying and Death, T. Rando*