

Grieving

Early Acute Grief Reactions

Denial. This stage is usually more pronounced in cases of unexpected death. The bereaved person will often slip in and out of denial during the first few weeks of the experience.

Shock And Numbness. At first, mourners slip in and out of this stage often. We don't want to believe that the death or grief has occurred and we put up barriers to acceptance in our minds. Full acceptance of a significant death takes a long time.

Emotion. Don't be afraid to cry or to let someone cry. If you are the friend, don't feel that you have to say something comforting when your friend cries. It's enough just to be there and to convey to the person that you are not uncomfortable with their tears.

Additional Experiences

Depression. Sorting through the emotions of grief is extremely time and energy consuming. When you couple these emotions with the demands of the world to "get on" with normal activities, it's not surprising that many bereaved persons experience a period of depression. Many people in this stage claim to feel rather "cut off" from life.

Physical Reactions. Some people experience physical reactions such as headaches or other health problems following the death of a loved one, or they may find themselves forgetting things they always remembered. Rather than a cause for worry, these things will usually pass as the bereaved person progresses through the grief.

Guilt, Anger, And Resentment. Normal guilt or regret is fairly common. This type of guilt occurs when the bereaved person regrets some of his/her actions toward the deceased. Anger and resentment can occur as the bereaved person emerges from depression. When we lose something precious, it is a normal reaction to try to understand why this event has occurred. But if anger is allowed to take over, it will prolong the working through of the grief.

Fading Grief

Memories And Readjustment. At this point the bereaved might appear to "be back to normal," but they also feel the tug to resist returning to their normal routine. Sometimes they have become accustomed to the world of grief and don't feel up to the challenges of our fast-paced life. Remember that the goal of grief is not to "get over it". The death of a significant person in one's life causes permanent changes.

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