

Some Facts about Grief

Grief is a normal, natural and painful emotional reaction to loss.

Causes of Grief

- Passing of a human life
- Death of a relationship (divorce)
- Loss of health and function
- Loss of independence
- Loss of a pet

Grieving involves intense feelings – love, sadness, fear, anger, relief, compassion, hate, or happiness, to name a few.

These feelings are intense, upsetting and can be long-lasting. Grieving has been described as drowning in a sea of painful emotions.

Stages of Grief

1. **Shock** – Immediately following the death of a loved one, it is difficult to accept the loss. A feeling of unreality, a feeling of being out-of-touch.
2. **Emotional release** – Awareness of enormity of loss is realized accompanied by intense pangs of grief. In this stage a grieving individual sleeps badly and weeps uncontrollably.
3. **Panic** – Feelings of mental instability, wandering around aimlessly, forgetting things, physical symptoms.
4. **Guilt** – Feelings of guilt about failures in relationship, ability to change situation, to save deceased.
5. **Hostility/anger** – Feelings of anger over the situation, cause of death and sometimes even at the deceased.
6. **Inability to get back to normal** – Difficulty in regaining normality of daily living. Difficulty in concentrating on the day-to-day activities. The grieving person's entire being, emotional, physical and spiritual, is focused on the loss that just occurred.
7. **Acceptance of loss** – Life balance slowly returns. There are no set timeframes for healing. Each individual is different.
8. **Hope** – The pains of grief are still present but the grieving person is able to find hope for the future. The individual is able to move forward in life with good feelings knowing they will always remember and have memories of the loved one.

Note: Consumers may pass through each stage more than once, and may be in more than one stage at a time. There is no particular order in which they may work through these stages. Even if they appear to have reached the end, another loss may trigger them to go back into another stage.

Helping Consumers through the Grief Process

- Encourage the consumer to take their time going through the grief process. Support them and family not to try to rush the process.
- Explain to the consumer that because this is a time of instability and high emotions, it is not a good time to make major life decisions.
- Encourage use of support groups for drug and alcohol if the consumer or family has a history of dependency.
- Help the consumer to understand that they will have good days and bad days.
- Encourage them to seek out people who can listen to their stories and remember their loved ones.
- Reinforce that grief is a very personal and individual process – no one experiences it the same way.