

## Understanding Grief After Losing a Loved One

Grief is a person's natural response to an important loss. Grief results in many different emotions. Over time, normal grieving can help you accept and heal from your loss, and move forward positively with your life.

Many types of loss result in feelings of grief, including the loss of a loved one or cherished pet; health or physical ability; job, home or financial security; or even the loss of an important personal goal.

### *Bereavement and Mourning*

*Bereavement* describes the time period during which you experience grief. Its duration depends on your personality and relationship with your deceased loved one, and whether your loss was expected or sudden. Your culture, religion, support systems and even your financial circumstances may affect how you respond to and cope with grief.

*Mourning* is the outward expression of grief. Cultural customs and traditions often influence how people express grief. Mourning is also expressed as a period of time. Duration and expressions of mourning vary greatly by individual. Mourning rituals acknowledge the loss while offering social support, structure and reaffirmation of life.

### *Common Responses*

Everyone responds to and copes with grief differently, yet the following feelings are common:

- Shock, disbelief and "numbness"
- Irritability, envy or anger
- Sadness, loneliness or depression
- Frustration or feeling misunderstood
- Fatigue or lethargy
- Anxiety or fearfulness

- Guilt or remorse
- Physical discomfort or feeling unwell
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Feelings of wanting to “escape”
- Avoiding activities that you previously enjoyed with your loved one
- Thoughts or dreams of your deceased loved one

### *Unexpected Responses*

If you had a complicated connection with your loved one you may experience unexpected emotions. It's not uncommon to feel distress, regret or even relief as you grieve the loss of a challenging relationship.

Sudden loss after events like accidents can be traumatic. You may experience sleep disturbances, anxiety and/or fearful, distressing thoughts. Expected losses, like those due to terminal illness, sometimes give you more time to prepare emotionally. Yet you may still feel shock and sadness. End-of-Life initiates the grieving process for most people.

### *Grief “Stages”*

American psychiatrist [Elisabeth Kübler-Ross](#) introduced The Kübler-Ross Model, also called The Five Stages of Grief, in her 1969 book, *On Death and Dying* to describe emotional stages one may experience after losing a loved one. Although she identified five common grief “stages” including denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, Kübler-Ross stressed that they may overlap, occur concurrently or not occur at all. Grief is as unique as the person experiencing it. There is no “normal” timetable or predictable schedule for grief.

Grief is a universal, uniquely personal experience. Be patient as you experience your own responses to your loss. With time and support, the intensity of your grief should be less and healing will naturally follow.

Visit: [www.passare.com](http://www.passare.com) for more information and expert resources on grief and many End-of-Life topics.