

Signs & Symptoms of Grief

<i>Physical</i>	<i>Emotional</i>	<i>Cognitive, Spiritual</i>	<i>Behavioral</i>
◆ Back, neck, muscle pain	◆ Shock, emotional numbness	◆ Disbelief, unreality, "a fog"	◆ Sleep disturbance
◆ Stomach upset, diarrhea, constipation	◆ Sadness, sorrow, despair	◆ Confusion, disorientation	◆ Change in appetite
◆ Weight loss	◆ Anger, protest, irritability, resentment	◆ Memory, concentration problems	◆ Searching for the deceased
◆ Feelings of weakness, fatigue	◆ Self-reproach, guilt, regret	◆ Need to make sense of the death – "Why?"	◆ Sighing, crying, "weepiness"
◆ Feelings of emptiness, heaviness	◆ Anxiety – general or specific	◆ Rumination about deceased or death	◆ Carrying objects, visiting places linking with the deceased
◆ Restlessness, "nerves", hyperactivity, "wired"	◆ Fear of "going crazy"	◆ Idealization of deceased and lowered self-esteem	◆ Social withdrawal
◆ Headaches	◆ Helplessness, "out of control", overwhelmed	◆ Visions, contact with deceased	◆ Avoidance of reminders of deceased or the loss
◆ Chills, sweats, "cold hands"	◆ Mood swings, emotional "roller coaster"	◆ Difficulty with decisions	◆ Change in sexual desire (increase or decrease)
◆ Chest pain, tightness, difficulty breathing	◆ Peace, calm, heightened awareness	◆ Dreams or nightmares of deceased or death	◆ Increased use of alcohol and other drugs
◆ Dry mouth	◆ Relief	◆ Absent-mindedness	◆ Telling the story, over and over
◆ Startle response	◆ Feelings of presence	◆ Feelings of meaninglessness	◆ Cling, difficulty with separations
	◆ Loneliness	◆ Depersonalization – sense of unreality	
	◆ Yearning, pining	◆ Denial, "not really dead, just gone"	
	◆ Apathy, lack of pleasure in anything	◆ Assumptive world changes	
	◆ Agitation		

From the book *Tear Soup*:

If you are the one grieving...

- This is your grief -- no one else's. Your friends can't feel your loss in the same way. It will not affect their life the way it affects yours. And you may resent them for that.
- Sudden mood swings are normal. You may suddenly be unreasonable and short.
- Try your best to educate your friends about what you need and how they can help. Be honest as you can be about how you are feeling.
- Don't give up on our friends if they let you down. But if they continue to be insensitive to your grief you may need to distance yourself for a while until you get stronger.
- At first you will probably want to talk to as many people as possible, but after a month or so, find one or two people whom you can count on for the long haul to be there and listen when you need to talk.
- Write your thoughts in a journal. It will help you to process and also to remember the new insights you are learning.
- Consider attending a support group. Go at least three times before deciding if it is helpful to you.
- Be open to counseling.
- Exercise, sleep, drink plenty of fluids, and eat a well balanced diet.
- Pamper yourself. Take bubble baths. Get a massage.
- Try not to compare your grief with another's. You don't earn points for having a more painful experience than someone else. And you won't feel less grief if someone else's loss is worse.
- You deserve to feel happy again. Being happy doesn't mean you forget. Learn to be grateful for the good days.
- Don't be too hard on yourself.
- Long after everyone else has forgotten your loss, you will continue to remember. Learn to be content with your private memories.

If your friend is the one that is grieving...

- Be there for your friend, even when you don't understand.
- Be a source of comfort by listening, laughing, and crying.
- Stick close to your friend and defend their rights to grieve.
- Allow your friend to make mistakes...or at least to grieve differently from the way you would grieve.
- Send flowers.
- Send cards. The message doesn't need to be long. Just let them know you haven't forgotten them
- Send one every few weeks for a while.
- Call your friend. Don't worry about being a bother. Let your friend tell you if they don't want to talk about their loss right now.
- Answering machines and e-mails are great ways to keep in touch, allowing the bereaved person to respond only when they feel up to it.
- Try to anticipate when your friend may need. Bereaved persons sometimes don't know what to ask for.
- Avoid offering easy answers and platitudes. This only invalidates grief. Be patient. Don't try to rush your friend through their grief.
- Give your friend permission to grieve in front of you. Don't change the subject or tell them not to cry or act uncomfortable when they do cry.
- Ask them questions. But don't tell them how they should feel.
- Invite your friend to attend events together, as you normally would. Let them decide if they don't want to attend.
- Don't assume because your friend is having a good day that it means they are over their loss.
- Be mindful of holidays, birthdays and anniversaries.



Dos and Don'ts when reaching out to a mourner

Don't:

Force the mourner into a role, by saying, "You're doing so well." Allow the mourner to have troubling feelings without the sense of letting you down.

Tell the mourner what he or she "should" do. At best, this reinforces the mourner's sense of incompetence, and at worst, your advice can be "off target" completely.

Say, "Call me if you need anything." Vague offers are to be declined, and the mourner will pick up the cue that you implicitly hope he or she will not contact you.

Suggest that time heals all wounds. The wounds of loss never completely heal, and grief work is more active than this phrase suggests.

Delegate helping to others. Your personal presence and concern will make a difference.

Say, "I know how you feel." Each griever's experience of grief is unique, so invite the mourner to share his or her feelings, rather than presuming that you know what the issues are for that person.

Use hackneyed consolation, by saying, "There are other fish in the sea," or "God works in mysterious ways." This only convinces the mourner that you do not care enough to understand.

Try to hurry the person through grief by urging that he or she get busy, give away the deceased's possessions, etc. Grief work takes time and patience and cannot be done on a fixed schedule.

Do:

Open the door to communication. If you are not sure what to say, ask, "How are you feeling today?" Or "I've been thinking about you. How is it going?"

Listen 80% of the time, and talk 20% of the time. Very few people take the time to listen to someone's deepest concerns. Be one of the few. Both you and the mourner are likely to learn as a result.

Offer specific help and take the initiative to call a mourner. If you also respect the survivor's privacy, your concrete assistance with the demands of daily living will be appreciated.

Expect future "rough spots," with active attempts at coping with difficult feelings and decisions for months following the loss.

"Be there" for the mourner. There are a few rules for helping aside from openness and caring.

Talk about your own losses and how you have adapted to them. Although the mourner's coping style may be different from your own, your self-disclosure will help.

Use appropriate physical contact—like an arm around the shoulder or a hug—when words fail. Learn to be comfortable with shared silence, rather than chattering away in an attempt to cheer the person up.

Be patient with the griever's story, and allow him or her to share memories of the lost loved one. This fosters a healthy continuity as the person orients to a changed future.

The After-Loss Credo

I need to talk about my loss.

I may frequently need for you to listen while I explain what this loss means to me.

Try not to judge me now - or think that am behaving strangely. Remember that I am grieving. I may even be in shock.

I need to know that you care about me. I need to feel your touch, your hugs.

Sometimes when you ask me what you can do to help me, I honestly do not know.

I need for you to believe in me and in my ability to get through this grief in my own time and in my own way.

Please don't tell me that you know just how I feel. No one will ever really understand just how I feel.

Please don't tell me, either, that this death was really God's will - or that He will need the presence of my loved one more than I do.

Don't be concerned if you think I am getting better and then suddenly I seem to slip backward again.

And finally, please give me the time I need to grieve and to recover.

Most of all, thank you for just being my friend.



The Dual Purpose of Tears

It's been known for centuries that tears are powerful communicators. Parents invariably move fast when their children's tears start flowing. And strong men have been known to get weak in the knees when their wives cry. For thousands of years, tears were the only defense women and children had in a world ruled by men. And, despite historical social prohibitions against tears, grown men have always cried.

Recently, as researchers began to objectively investigate the purpose of tears, something fairly obvious emerged: Besides asking for help, or attracting attention, another purpose for tears was to wash out eye irritants. And when scientists subjected tears to chemical analysis, they discovered that the body rids itself of tears that contain chemicals involved with emotional stress.

Interestingly, the chemical makeup of irritant tears turns out to be actually different from the chemical makeup of emotional tears. And, although it is possible to stop irritant tears with certain other chemicals, it is impossible to stop emotional tears with those same chemicals.

That is what led researchers to believe that the purpose of emotional tears is to get rid of stress chemicals accumulating in the body. It would help explain why most people feel better after crying.

Further evidence for that view comes from other sources. It has been found that people who don't cry are at high risk for ulcers, colitis, migraine headaches, and other psychosomatic illnesses. Research also shows that people who don't cry have a difficult time handling stressful situations.

So cry if you need to. Crying is more than a way to ask for help, get attention or wash out the eyes. It also appears to be an emotional chemical release mechanism.

Here is a list of resources that you can utilize at any time.

Contacts:

Dr. Leanne Hadley – 719 520-9024

She is located in the Springs and offers FREE services for children

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Leanne@1ststeps.net

Kathy Sparrins, Bereavement Coordinator for Centered Life and provides groups for Prospect Home Care and Hospice 719 659-0447

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