



Coping with the Emotions of Grief

Grieving can be very much like a spiral that circles around the seasons of the year. For some of us, grief may be filled with tides of feelings that wash over us like waves. Yet, in our linear society we are often taught that grief is a problem with a beginning and ending, rather than a process.

The intensity and type of emotions following a loss varies from person to person and will usually change over time. Whatever our emotional responses are, it is helpful to listen to our feelings and allow them without judgment. It is also important to find others who will accept our reactions without criticism. Indeed, the support of family, friends, and community is essential for most of us as we adjust.

As we allow our personal grief responses to unfold, we can find healing from the pain of loss. As we learn how to navigate the new world in which we find ourselves, the following suggestions may be helpful:

- When you experience fear, anger, helplessness, sorrow, pain, emptiness, isolation, depression, relief, it can be very confusing. Questions to ask yourself to help you focus are:
 - How do I feel right now? (Check body sensations as well as emotions.)
 - What am I thinking right now? (Notice the thoughts which come before and during the feelings.)
 - What do I need right now? (Focus on immediate, attainable needs.)
 - How can I meet these needs right now? (Assess whether a supportive person can help.)
- Write a letter or draw a picture to get your internal feelings and thoughts from the inside to the outside.
- Keep a diary to help sort out your feelings and gain perspective on your life. Over a period of time, you may see your challenges and choices more clearly through what you have written.
 - Record successes and accomplishments.
 - Reflect on the struggles of your daily life.
 - Write about “what feels incomplete.”
 - Reminisce about the person who died, specific memories of your time together, what you loved and what annoyed you, changes in your relationship over time.
 - Write about appreciation and gratitude. What do you appreciate about this person? What gifts did you give and receive during your time together? What other aspects of life do you appreciate (people, qualities, places, things)? What do you appreciate about yourself?