



How Grief May Manifest

Grief encompasses a broad range of responses. The following list of feelings, physical reactions, thoughts, and behaviors are common, especially in early grief. However, your experiences and reactions will be unique to you. They may be affected by the type and circumstances of the loss, your relationship to the person who died, prior losses you have experienced, as well as by many other factors.

Feelings

- Shock, numbness, sense of unreality
- Sadness, depression
- Relief
- Anxiety, fear
- Anger, irritability
- Guilt, self-reproach
- Helplessness, vulnerability
- Loneliness
- Yearning
- Low self-esteem
- Mood swings
- Feeling of being crazy
- Intensity of all feelings

Behaviors

- Outward expression of emotion, crying, angry outbursts
- Searching and calling out
- Sighing
- Restlessness
- Visiting places or carrying objects that are reminders of the deceased
- Avoiding reminders of the loss
- Picking up mannerisms of the deceased
- Exhibiting symptoms of the deceased's illness
- Being accident prone
- Changes in sexual activities
- Obsessive activity

Physical Reactions

- Tiredness, exhaustion
- Appetite changes
- Insomnia
- Headaches
- Muscle aches
- Sensitivity to noise
- Hollowness in the stomach
- Tightness in the chest or throat
- Nervous energy
- Feeling of being short of breath
- Heavy or empty feeling in the body
- Heart pounding
- Susceptibility to illness

Mental Reactions

- Difficulty with concentration, memory
- Nothing seems real
- Disorientation, confusion
- Continual thinking about the loss, reviewing the circumstances
- Fantasizing
- Apathy
- Dreaming about or sensing deceased's presence

Spiritual Reactions

- Searching for meaning in the loss
- Changes in religious or spiritual behaviors or beliefs
- Questioning why



Practical Challenges

- Returning to work
- Making decisions
- Learning to manage a house, cooking, shopping, laundry, gardening
- Change in finances
- Learning to manage bookkeeping
- Transportation issues
- Change in living conditions
- Disposing of deceased's property

Social Changes

- Need for support of close friends
- Social withdrawal
- Concern about acting "normal" around others
- Self-focused (no interest in others)
- Need for relationships unrelated to the loss (e.g. at work)
- Marital difficulties
- Role changes, role reversals
- Change in social patterns (e.g. once a couple, now a single person)

Adapted from *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy* by William Worden and *Grieving Beyond Gender* by Kenneth J. Doka and Terry L. Martin.