



# **GRIEF... *Is this Normal?***

*At a time following loss or bereavement, our feelings may be among the most profound and painful we ever experience.*

*They are a natural reaction to the grief and loss we are experiencing.*

*If we are able to understand them, it can help us to come to terms with what has happened.*

<b>EMOTION</b>	<b>REACTION</b>
<b>NUMBNESS</b>	You may not feel much at first, due to the shock, and you may feel bad about this.
<b>DISBELIEF</b>	You may not be able to believe the person really has died; you may find yourself looking for them in familiar places or you think you have seen them
<b>YEARNING</b>	You may ache with longing to be able to put the clock back and to be with your friend and loved one again.
<b>SADNESS</b>	You may feel “down” and tearful.
<b>ANGER</b>	At whoever or whatever seems responsible for the death and want to blame them; at "Life" or "God" for the injustice and unfairness of it; at the dead person (which is more difficult to accept) for leaving or abandoning you; at other people for continuing to have fun, for appearing trivial or for not understanding your feelings.
<b>GUILT</b>	Regretting things you said or did not say, things you did or did not do; for surviving and being alive when they are not; for feeling relief eg; at the death of someone who was ill and suffering.
<b>FEAR</b>	At death's shadow having passed so close to you; at your sense of your own mortality, causing you anxiety and panic; of harm to yourself or others close to you; of “going mad”, of being overwhelmed by your feelings; of not being able to cope; of losing hold of the image or memory of the person who died.
<b>SHAME</b>	For being seen as helpless and emotional (eg; crying) or for not being emotional; for feeling you are burdening friends and others with your unhappiness; for envying others who have not suffered your loss.
<b>LONELINESS</b>	Feeling isolated by your grief: either wanting to avoid other people, or feeling avoided by them; feeling no-one can understand what you are going through; feeling that the loss has left a hole in your life and in you that will never be filled.
<b>APATHY</b>	No motivation to do anything and no concentration, so unable to do your work.
<b>DEPRESSION</b>	You may begin to feel hopeless and in despair; you may feel that life is meaningless and pointless; you may feel that there is no future for you to look forward to; worry that you will never feel “all right” again; if you start thinking about suicide or if you feel you are becoming depressed arranging to see your GP may be helpful.



# Common Physical and Behavioural Symptoms of Grief and Loss

SYMPTOM	
<b>EXHAUSTION</b>	Due to being emotionally drained and worn out, or
<b>SLEEPLESSNESS</b>	You feel restless and your mind races and keeps you awake; Bad dreams disturb you in the night;
<b>LOSS OF APPETITE</b>	you may lose interest in eating, appetite diminishes;
<b>IRRITABILITY</b>	You may feel easily annoyed and irritated by small
<b>PREOCCUPATION</b>	Incessant thoughts about the person and his/her death
<b>LACK OF CONCENTRATION</b>	Find it hard to focus on things for any length of time, feeling distracted.
<b>FUZZINESS OF MIND</b>	You cannot think clearly or remember things.;
<b>BREATHING DIFFICULTIES</b>	Anxiety or panic attacks; Shortness of breath;
<b>MUSCULAR TENSIONS/ PAINS</b>	Headaches, neck ache, back ache, muscle pains;
<b>DIZZINESS, SHAKES &amp; PALPITATIONS</b>	These are stress and anxiety symptoms;
<b>NAUSEA</b>	actual nausea or just feeling the sensation of getting
<b>WITHDRAWAL/ AVOIDANCE</b>	Finding it hard to be around others, to engage socially, or experience a lack of interest or pleasure

# Factors that may influence the Grief Process

Grief is not an isolated event and there are many factors that may influence your experience of grief and subsequent coping.

Such factors include:

- ⇒ Past experience of loss
- ⇒ Personal coping strategies, inner strengths and resources
- ⇒ Nature of your relationship to the deceased
- ⇒ Role deceased played in your life
- ⇒ Unfinished business with the deceased
- ⇒ Emotional investment in the deceased
- ⇒ Circumstances leading up to and surrounding the death
- ⇒ Being unprepared for the death or impact of sudden death
- ⇒ Amount of help/support available to you
- ⇒ Implication of death for you and your family
- ⇒ Changed role in life due to the death of a significant other
- ⇒ Meaning of death for you/your religious/spiritual beliefs



<b>COPING SKILLS</b>	<b>WHAT CAN HELP</b>
<b>Talking About Your Loss</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ With someone you trust eg; friend, relative, tutor, chaplain, counsellor;</li> <li>⇒ Share your feelings and thoughts with them;</li> <li>⇒ You may need to go through these again and again before you feel ready to move on—this is natural.</li> </ul>
<b>Expressing Your Emotions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Crying is a natural response to unhappiness and brings relief;</li> <li>⇒ Often we hold back our tears, afraid of seeming weak, and imprison the grief inside us;</li> <li>⇒ Through some other outlet that feels right for you such as: writing (poems, letters, diary), painting, modelling, playing music or sports;</li> </ul> <p>It helps to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Express your feelings;</li> <li>⇒ Talk to those who care;</li> <li>⇒ Give yourself time;</li> </ul>
<b>Remembering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Keeping a memento (a photograph, a piece of clothing, a special CD - or anything you treasure) can help your sense of staying close to the person you have lost;</li> <li>⇒ Making time to be with your memories of them on birthdays and anniversaries;</li> <li>⇒ Visiting places which remind you of them and times you spent together;</li> </ul> <p>Try not to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Bottle up your feelings;</li> <li>⇒ Avoid the subject;</li> <li>⇒ Expect feelings to pass quickly;</li> </ul>

COPING SKILLS	WHAT CAN HELP
Focus on Reality	⇒ Attending funerals, returning to the scene, talking to people who know what happened, are all ways that help to make a situation which seems unreal or unbelievable to gradually become more credible, real, and easier to bear;
Take Care of 'You'	⇒ Exercise / diet / sleep / support are all important ways of taking care of you; ⇒ Drive with extra care; ⇒ Be more careful generally; ⇒ Accidents are more common after severe stress; ⇒ You may find it harder to concentrate and focus.

## THE 5 STAGES OF GRIEF



Denial



Anger



Bargaining



Depression



Acceptance

# WHEN TO SEEK EXTRA HELP

Sometimes the normal processes of grieving and healing may become stuck or unbearable. If you feel this happening to you, don't hesitate to ask for help.

- If you find you are unable to work - no motivation, no concentration, talk to your tutor / college counsellor;
- If physical symptoms persist i.e. your sleeplessness, lack of appetite and low mood continue arrange to see your GP;
- If your feelings of despair and hopelessness become overwhelming and you begin to feel suicidal contact your GP, A&E or college Counsellor;
- Similarly, if nightmares or horrific images persist or if you experience panic attacks and feelings of extreme anxiety consult your GP and/or the college counsellor;
- Finally, if you continue to feel numb, empty and unable to grieve, or if you find you are drinking, smoking, taking drugs or keeping busy to excess, in order to avoid the pain of your feelings, exploring these issues with a counsellor can be helpful.

