
Grief

Grief is described as a period of intense emotional pain and suffering caused by some type of loss in your life. The loss can be related to events such as:

- The death of a loved one
- Separation or divorce
- Miscarriage
- Injury or disability
- Loss of job, pet or property
- Children leaving home

People can emotionally react to grief in a variety of ways. Depending on the severity of the loss and the amount of emotional support, grief can express itself in ways such as shock, denial, anger, guilt, depression, and becoming withdrawn. These feelings and emotions may be very powerful and frightening and it is common for them to occur over a very long time. No two people experience grief the same way.

Mourning can best be described as a process that a person goes through in accepting and adapting to the loss. For example, in mourning the loss of a loved one, grieving is the process where the person works through the loss by gradually letting go of the emotional ties that created the loving bond with the person who has died. They must learn to live a new life without the loved one. How well the person expresses feelings and the extent of emotional support available can influence the length of time of grieving.

During the grieving process, emotions can be like a roller coaster with changes in the intensity of emotions that can change within minutes or days. It is important in your recovery to accept these fluctuations as a normal part of grieving and not as a permanent setback or failure on your part to recover from your loss. There is no set time period for how long grief will or should last. Grief is unique to each person. Do not let someone tell you how long it will take to return to normal.

Does grief ever end? At some point in time the suffering will ease in its level of intensity. This will occur as you integrate the loss into your new life. This doesn't mean that you will ever stop having periods of sadness, remorse, and longing for your loved one. For example, if you have lost a loved one, you may experience more feelings of loss during special dates or events that remind you of the deceased person. This is especially true during the first year after the loss. It does mean that the intense phase of suffering will eventually come to an end as you work in resolving your grief.

TREATMENT: Talking to someone about how you feel is the best help for loss. If a person does not want to talk about the loss at first, they should not be forced to talk. However, expression of the feelings, whether through talking, praying, writing, or crying is necessary for health grieving. A professional counselor would be helpful when there is: overwhelming periods of emotion; the grief is interfering with daily functioning such as personal care, family or employment responsibilities, and grieving symptoms have continued over a considerable amount of time. The emotional, Spiritual, and social needs should be addressed, as they become appropriate.