



Grief is a natural reaction to death. Everyone has a different way of facing grief and a timetable for recovering from a loss. People mourning a loved one usually follow a pattern in the process of recovering. Shock and denial are the first reactions to the message of death. Many can't believe that it's true. Some people can't comprehend the full meaning of the loss but this sense of detachment doesn't last long and very soon the impact of the loss is real.

When the loss is realized, strong emotions and a sense of disorganization occurs including: anger, blaming, resentment, feelings of guilt, depression and loneliness.

Some physical symptoms of distress, such as nervousness, moodiness, sleeplessness, headaches, lack of appetite, restlessness, and an accentuation of any chronic physical ailments can go along with emotional reactions. Many worry about their own mental health when they continue to think of the loss.

When people begin to accept the truth of loss and look to the future, the recovery stage begins.

Use these four "B's" to help friends or family members with their grief:

Be aware. Knowing the grief process and pattern of grieving will help you understand.

Be there. Learn to be with the person but not to solve the problem. Allow expression of feelings of guilt, anger, sorrow, confusion, depression and loneliness without judgment. Gentle touching, holding or hugging are helpful. These nonverbals may encourage them to talk about deep feelings and helpless situations.

Be sensitive and ready to listen. Allow the pain. Learn not to try to take it away. Listen when the story is told over and over again. The grief process can't be hurried.

Help by listening when the grieving person wants to talk about their feelings or repeat the stories.

Be patient. Remember that the process of mourning takes time. Keep in touch.

Make phone calls and visit regularly. The real void is felt after the funeral is over and the relatives have left. That is often when you can help the most.

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