

Grief: What Helps When It Hurts

- ◆ Grieving is a uniquely individual experience with neither a schedule nor timetable. Experts no longer look for universal stages, recognizing instead that individuals grieve in their own ways.
- ◆ Grief emotions may include some or all of the following: sadness, loneliness, yearning, guilt, jealousy or anger.
- ◆ Grieving individuals may feel guilty that they caused the death or contributed to the loss in some other manner. Some people may feel guilty because they think it should hurt more or because they do not believe they are coping well with grief.
- ◆ Some people are resilient and their reactions to grief are more muted.
- ◆ People who are recently bereaved often are distracted, thus are advised to delay major decisions such as remarrying, changing jobs or retiring, or buying a house, until they can give such important matters the careful thought and consideration they deserve.
- ◆ Whether people weep openly or are more reserved, at some point talking with others -- a support group, counselor or confidante -- may help. Saying things that they want and need to say may help ease the pain. Others may find it helps to engage in activities that honor the person they lost.
- ◆ People usually can decide for themselves whether additional help is needed. Anyone who is having trouble coping with a loss and believes there may be benefit in sharing the experience with others who have experienced a similar loss, or with a counselor, should do so.
- ◆ Individuals who are focused so completely and intently on the loss that their grief is disabling should consider seeking help from a grief counselor or mental health professional.
- ◆ Individuals who are doing self-destructive things such as abusing drugs or alcohol should get help immediately by contacting a grief counselor or a mental health professional.
- ◆ Individuals who are thinking about hurting themselves or others *must* get help immediately by calling 911, contacting a suicide hotline, a grief counselor, or a mental health professional.

