



## **GRIEF IS NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS!**

Grief is not a sign of weakness. Grief is necessary to bearing sorrow honestly; to accepting its reality. Realize that grief is an inevitable and loving reaction; a tribute to the loss of someone very precious. That realization is a sure sign of recovery from grief. Grief is not something you can run away from nor repress; but don't cling to it too hard or too long. Let grief have its way for a while; then, gradually and gently, release yourself from its grip. For most people, there is a pattern to grief. These ten components are part of the pattern for many but each of us is different. Some of us do not go through all the stages. Others do not experience them in the same order; nor for equal lengths of time; nor with equal depth. This may help you identify your pattern, where you are in the cycle and what you will probably go through.

### **GRIEF CYCLE**

#### **1. SHOCK**

Temporarily stunned; in a trance as a response to the death of your loved one. Perhaps relieved at the end of pain for your loved one. May last for minutes, hours, days or weeks. Tendency to let others make decisions. May use medication to help you sleep. But shock wears off; soon you must face the reality of death with all its emotions; you try to regain control of yourself and begin to take the next steps to accepting the loss of your loved one.

#### **2. FACING EMOTIONS**

You must confront, analyze and deal with your emotions. These emotions provide motivation for action; if not understood, they endanger future actions. Use help from others to understand your emotions. During this period, you should not make major decisions too soon; emotions may lead to mistakes. It is better to wait until grief is worked through, at least to some degree.

#### **3. DEPRESSION**

Loneliness and depression are a normal part of grief. They affect all of us, but in varying degrees. They, too, will pass. Recognize the difference between loneliness and just being alone, there is a significant difference. Being alone is not a negative thing, it gives you time to think and deal with your emotions privately. Also, be careful not to relate all of your depression to the loss of a loved one; other stresses can play a part. Do recognize that you can control your depression by reaching out to others.

#### **4. PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS**

Your thoughts and emotions can cause physical stress. In addition, there may be a tendency here to resort to excessive drinking, smoking, little exercise, bad eating habits, etc. These physical symptoms are the result of unresolved grief. There is a relationship between illness and loss. You should examine the cause and symptoms and deal with them.

#### **5. PANIC**

You may begin to panic in the face of the unknown and your fear of going it alone; you may have trouble concentrating and accepting the finality of death. Tendencies to run from life; find excuses to be alone; fear doing new things and facing people; difficulty coping with children or other family members. Unresolved grief can play tricks on your mind; this stage typically doesn't last too long unless you continue to deny the death.

#### **6. GUILT**

Almost everyone experiences some feelings of guilt after losing a loved one. Normal guilt is due to something you did or did not do while the loved one was alive. But unhealthy guilt occurs when the feelings are blown out of proportion; they can cloud and affect your health and behavior. In such cases you should examine your feelings and seek assistance from a counselor or therapist if you are overwhelmed by your feelings.

#### **7. HOSTILITY**

Resentment, hostility and anger are not uncommon feelings to those working through grief. There is a tendency to place blame; to be angry with God, doctors, clergy, family members, the loved one you lost and even you. Often we ask the wrong questions. Don't ask WHY? ; you may never know; instead ask "HOW can I live through this and help others?"

#### **8. DRIFTING**

There is sometimes an inability to return to usual and even necessary activities. You may feel that it is difficult to grieve in the presence of others; you don't want to bother anyone; you may have fantasies about your loved one, daydreams about what was or what might have been rather than facing the reality that he/she is gone. It is helpful to examine what it means to have lost the loved one (in other words, what does it mean to you that you no longer have a spouse, parent, sibling or friend?)

#### **9. HOPE**

Hope does finally shine through and then brightens. You achieve the ability to express emotions without fear of what others may think; you are able to control feelings and to feel warm affection for and be a source of encouragement to others. You are able to go out and to make decisions. Even in the deepest gloom we should expect to feel hope soon.

#### **10. REAFFIRM**

You will ultimately affirm your beliefs about yourself. You can never be the way you were but a new and complete person will emerge with much to give; you will be capable of helping others deal with their grief and loss; you are able to reach your full potential, building on new strength which adversity has created, gaining new self-esteem and a positive self-image.