

A GUIDE TO GRIEF – STAGES OF GRIEF

Grief is a normal response to loss. It can be the loss of a home, marriage or a loved one. Often the painful loss is the death of a person you love, whether from a long illness or from an accident or an act of violence.

The grieving process- Grief is painful and at times the pain seems unbearable. It is a combination of many emotions that come and go, sometimes without warning. Grieving is the period during which we actively experience these emotions. How long and difficult the grieving period is depends on the relationship with the person who died, the circumstances of the death, and the situations of the survivors. The length of time people grieve can be weeks, months and even years. One thing is certain-grief does not follow a timetable, but it does ease over time. Because grief is so painful, some people try to get over a loss by denying the pain. Studies show that when people do not deal with the emotions of grief, the pain does not go away. It remains with them, and can turn up in unrecognizable and sometimes destructive ways. Understanding the emotions of grief and its feelings and symptoms are important steps in healing and in helping others who may be grieving.

The feelings and symptoms of grief- Experts described the process of grieving and the emotions of grief in various ways. The most commonly described reactions are: shock, denial, anger, guilt, depression, acceptance, and growth. Some people experience the grieving process in this order. Most often, a person feels several of these emotions at the same time, perhaps in different degrees.

- **Shock:** If the death comes suddenly, as in an accident or murder, shock is often the first response people feel. Even if the death is anticipated, there is a period of disbelief that the death really occurred. A person may be numb, or like a robot, be able to go through the motions of life while actually feeling little. At the same time, physical symptoms such as confusion, loss of appetite, general pain, headaches and exhaustion are common.
- **Denial:** Shock and denial are nature's way of softening the immediate blow of death. Denial can follow soon after the initial shock. People may know their loved one has died, but some part of them cannot yet accept the reality of death. It is not uncommon to fantasize that the deceased will walk through the door, as if nothing has happened. Some people leave bedrooms unchanged or make future plans as if the loved one will participate, just as in the past.
- **Anger:** Anger is normal. It may be directed at the deceased for leaving and causing sense of abandonment, or at the doctors and nurses who did not do enough, or at a murderer who killed without remorse. People of faith may feel anger at God, for allowing so much pain and anguish. Anger may also be directed at oneself for not saving the life of the loved one. It can be mild feeling or a raging irrational emotion. It can test one's faith in religion or even in the goodness of life.
- **Guilt:** Few survivors escape some feelings of guilt and regret. I should have done more, are words that haunt many people. Were angry words exchanged? Most people are very creative in finding reasons for guilt. So many things could have been done differently *If only I had known.*
- **Sadness:** Sadness is the most inevitable emotion of grief. It is normal to feel abandoned, alone and afraid. After the shock and denial have passed and the anger has been exhausted, sadness

and even hopelessness may set in. A person may have little energy to do even simplest daily chores. Crying episodes may seem endless.

- **Acceptance:** Time alone will not heal grief. Acknowledging the loss and experiencing the pain may free the survivor from a yearning to return to the past. Accepting life without the loved one may give way to a new perspective about the future. Acceptance does not mean forgetting but rather using the memories to create a new life without the loved one. Hoping for things to be as they were may be replaced by a search for new relationships and new activities.
- **Growth:** Grief is a chance for personal growth. For many people, it may eventually lead to renewed energy to invest in new activities and/or relationships. Some people seek meaning in their loss and get involved in causes or projects that help others. Some people find a new compassion in themselves as a result of the pain they have suffered. They may become more sensitive to others, thus enabling richer relationships. Others find new strength and independence they never knew they had. After the loss, they find new emotional resources that had not been apparent before.

The experience of grief- Grieving people have 2 choices:

1. They can avoid the pain and all other emotions associated with their loss and continue on, hoping to forget. This is a risky choice, since experience shows that grief, when ignored, continues to cause pain.
2. The other choice is to recognize grieving and seek healing and growth. Getting over a loss is slow, hard work. In order for growth to be possible, it is essential to allow oneself to feel all the emotions that arise, as painful as they may be, and to treat oneself with patience and kindness.

Feel the pain- Give into it; even its precedence over other emotions and activities, because grief is a pain that will get in the way later if it is ignored. Realize that grief has no timetable; it is cyclical, so expect the emotions to come and go for weeks, months and even years. While a show of strength is admirable, it does not serve the need to express sadness, even when it comes out at unexpected times and places.

Talk about your sorrow- Take the time to seek comfort from friends who will listen. Let them know you need to talk about your loss. People will understand, although they may not know how to respond. If they change the subject, explain that you need to share your memories and express your sorrow.

Forgive yourself- Forgive yourself for all the things you should have done or said. Also forgive yourself for the anger and guilt and embarrassment you may have felt while grieving.

Eat well and exercise- Grief is exhausting. To sustain your energy, be sure to maintain a balanced diet. Exercise is also important in sustaining energy. Find a routine that suits you, perhaps walks or bike rides, with friends or in solitude. Clear your mind and refresh your body.

Prepare for holidays and anniversaries- Many people feel especially blue during these periods, and the anniversary date of a death can be especially painful. Even if you think you have progressed, these dates may bring back some of your painful emotions. Make arrangements to be with friends and family members with whom you are comfortable. Plan activities that gives you an opportunity to mark the anniversary.

Get help- Bereavement groups can help you recognize your feelings and put them in perspective. They can also help alleviate the feeling that you are alone. The experience of sharing with others who are in a similar situation can be comforting and reassuring. Sometimes, new friendships grow through these groups; even a whole new social network that you did not have before.

Take active steps to create a new life for yourself- Give yourself as much time to grieve as you need. Once you find new energy, begin to look for interesting things to do. Take courses, donate time to a cause you support, meet new people, or even find a new job. It is often tempting to try to replace the person who has been lost. Whether through adoption, remarriage, or other means; this form of reconciliation often does not work. Many people discover that there is hope after death. Death takes away, but grief can give back. It is possible to recover from grief with new strengths and a new direction. By acting on our grief, we may eventually find peace and purpose.

From : <https://www.hospicenet.org/html/grief2.html>

BEREAVEMENT SERVICES IN PRESCOTT RUSSELL

AGENCY	TELEPHONE #
<p>Bereaved Families of Ontario Helping the bereaved learn to live with grief. Create programs, services and resources to support bereaved families.</p>	<p>Cornwall: 613-936-1455 216 Montreal rd. www.bfocornwall.ca</p>
<p>Canadian Mental Health Association Research, information services and resource centers.</p>	<p>Hawkesbury : 613-938-0435 Alexandria/Casselman/Rockland/Cornwall/Winchester: 1-800-493-8271 http://www.cmha.ca/</p>
<p>Carefor Health and Community Services Provide services for elder persons. Many services can be provided in the comfort of client's home, retirement facility or in a local community setting.</p>	<p>Cornwall office: 613-932-3451/1-800-267-1741 Hawkesbury office: 613 632-0418 (contact person Penny) www.carefor.ca</p>
<p>Centre Royal Comtois Center Psychiatric consultation, psychiatric follow-up, psychopharmacology, psychotherapy, social anxiety program.</p>	<p>Hawkesbury: 613-632-0139 Ligne de crise: 613 632-8454 www.hgh.ca</p>
<p>Child, Youth & Family Crisis Line</p>	<p>613-260-2360 (Ottawa) Toll-Free: 1-877-377-7775 www.icrs.ca</p>
<p>Child and Youth Counseling Services Provide outpatient services for children. Mental health program. Provides assessment therapy and support, counseling and consultation. In English only.</p>	<p>Cornwall : 613-932-1558 / 1-866-531-2600 www.champlainhealthline.ca</p>
<p>Kids Help Line Phone counselling for kids and teenagers.</p>	<p>1-800-668-6868 (24/7) www.kidshelpphone.ca</p>
<p>Mental Health Crisis Line</p>	<p>613 632-8454 / 1-866-520-8172 (Between 8 a.m. & midnight) 1-866-996-0991 (Between 8 a.m. & midnight) www.crisisline.ca</p>
<p>Paroisse St-Trinité (la Traversé)</p>	<p>Rockland : 613-446-5933 Salle Curé Hudon 2178 Laurier Rockland</p>
<p>Services aux victimes Prescott-Russell Victim Services</p>	<p>1 main street, suite 110, Hawkesbury, ON K6A 1A1 Hawkesbury: 613-632-5282 Toll Free: 1-877-632-7530</p>