



Losing someone close to you can be very painful. After a significant loss you may experience all kinds of difficult and surprising emotions such as shock, anger and guilt. While these feelings can be frightening and overwhelming, they are normal reactions to loss. Everyone responds differently and it is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

What is Grief?

Grief is a normal natural process of healing and adjusting to your loss. It is a process we face when we are confronted with the death of someone we are close to.

What does grief feel like?

Many people experience different sensations when they are grieving. Grief can make you feel exhausted and physically run down. Other feelings and emotions you may feel include shock and disbelief, helplessness, anger, sadness, relief, guilt, loneliness and frustration. You may find that you cannot concentrate as well as before. Grief can be painful and the months following the death of someone close can be difficult as you struggle to find a new way of being normal.

How long will it last?

The grieving process is very individual and is different for everyone. There is no set time period. Grief often comes in waves, and can be triggered by memories, songs, photos, movies and even smells. These intense feelings may begin to ease a little after the first year. However allowing yourself time to grieve is the best way to heal.

What can be helpful?

It is important to take care of yourself when you are grieving. Grieving uses a lot of emotional energy, and you will probably feel very drained. The mind and body are connected, therefore looking after your physical and emotional needs will help you through this difficult time.

- ☞ Find someone you can talk to and who will listen. This may be friends, family or a counsellor but choose someone you trust.
- ☞ Look after your physical and emotional health by getting plenty of rest and eating well and balance this by participating in some productive activity. If you have concerns about your wellbeing, talk to your General Practitioner.
- ☞ Try not to make any major changes or decisions for a while as you are already in a time of adjustment. Do things at a slower pace and take one day at a time.

When the pain has eased a little, you may find yourself being able to remember the person you have lost without becoming too distressed. What has happened in the past is always a part of you and you will always hold the memories. They will always be a part of your life.

Remember there is no right way to grieve and no set time-frames.

You are unique and the relationship with the person you have lost is yours alone.

You are not 'abnormal' if you feel and act differently from how your family and friends do now or have in the past.

This is your journey.

This space can be used for you to list any questions you may want to ask the doctors and nurses:

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Where to seek professional help

- ☞ The staff who cared for your loved one can provide a listening ear. They may be able to refer you to an appropriate bereavement support service.
- ☞ Your general practitioner may be able to provide support and information.
- ☞ Counsellors or psychotherapists in private practice.
- ☞ Maori Health organisations.
- ☞ Counselling services funded by your employer (where a service exists).
- ☞ Literature - many good books are available. Contact your local bookseller, counsellors and chaplains or Hospice for suggestions.
- ☞ National Association of Loss and Grief (NALAG) www.nalag.org.nz
- ☞ Skylight (Wellington) on 0800 299100
- ☞ Internet/Web sites and libraries offer support and information.



COPING WITH BEREAVEMENT

Grieving is a natural process, and each of us grieves in a very individual way. This leaflet describes some of the common feelings you may experience when someone close to you dies.

