

DEALING WITH GRIEF

All of us must face the reality of death at some point in our lives – the reality of being separated from a cherished loved one.

It is uncomfortable for many people to think about death and contemplate its eventuality. Yet only then can we come to fully understand the value and meaning of our own lives and of those around us. Only then can we begin to live our lives to the fullest.

Every death changes the lives of those close to the deceased person. The ability to change and adapt to changes around you is the key to accepting and dealing with death. As in other aspects of our lives, the more we resist and fight against inevitable changes, the more pain we experience and the more unhappy we become.

In experiencing grief we may go through a full range of sometimes-contradictory emotions such as denial, anger, sorrow, guilt, and relief. We may even fluctuate from feeling stable to being deeply depressed. Ultimately, we must arrive at acceptance, the last stage of the process. We know we have achieved this stage when we can see the life of our loved one as a fond memory instead of dwelling on the person's death as a harsh reality. Only then can we go on living our own lives again.

According to research there are generally 10 stages in the grieving process:

1. **Shock and surprise.**
News of someone's death is almost always a shock.
2. **Emotional release.**
The release of tension and feelings with friends and family.
3. **Loneliness**
When friends and family have gone, feelings of emptiness may occur.
4. **Physical distress and anxiety.**
Feeling so alone that you may develop the same physical symptoms that the deceased had.
5. **Panic.**
Concentrating become difficult due to constant memories of the deceased. This may cause you to worry about your own stability and result in weaker self-esteem.
6. **Guilt.**
Dwelling on things you could have done and feeling responsible for the death.
7. **Hostility and projection.**
Becoming hostile with relatives and friends whom you think could have prevented the death.
8. **Lassitude.**
Suffering in silence, weary from the depression and frustration.
9. **Gradual overcoming of grief.**
Through the encouragement of family and friends, gradually a new meaning of life unfolds. Your outlook becomes brighter and more realistic.
10. **Readjustment to reality.**
Recalling the deceased becomes a pleasant experience and planning for the future becomes more realistic.

If you are grieving, and you are experiencing any of these symptoms, realize that they are all quite normal and in many ways a necessary part of the process.