

Ways Grief Can Affect Us

Remember, everyone is affected a little differently by grief. Some of these things will happen to you when you are grieving and some of them won't.

Common Feelings:

- **Shock** - feeling surprised and disturbed by a sudden powerful event
- **Numbness** - can't feel any emotion
- **Disbelief** - do not believe it really happened
- **Anxiety** - feeling nervous or worried
- **Fear** - do not feel safe, or feel that loved ones are not safe
- **Betrayal** - feeling someone purposely chose to hurt you
- **Emptiness** - feeling hopeless and sad, with nothing to give to others
- **Apathy** - things do not seem important anymore, not caring what happens
- **Impatience** - want things right away and have trouble waiting
- **Sadness** - feeling unhappy or sorrowful
- **Powerlessness** - having no control over what is happening
- **Agitation** - inability to relax, shaken up
- **Despair** - loss of hope
- **Uncertainty** - feeling unsure
- **Shame** - feeling dishonored or disgraced
- **Guilt** - self-blame, feeling regretful about doing or not doing something
- **Thankfulness** - grateful
- **Relief** - to feel free from stress, pain or burden
- **Loneliness** - feeling alone
- **Isolation** - removed or away from others

- **Anger** - a strong emotion of displeasure with others or an event
- **Strength** - tough, powerful
- **Weakness** - frail, powerless
- **Uselessness** - feeling worthless
- **Helplessness** - feeling like there is nothing one can do to make a difference

Common Mental Reactions

- Difficulties concentrating
- Continuously thinking about the loss
- Difficulty making decisions
- Low self-esteem
- Believing you were responsible for the loss
- Increased or decreased dreams
- Increased nightmares
- Thinking everyone is watching you
- Thinking you are different from everyone else
- Self-destructive thoughts

Common Physical Reactions

- Sleep changes: too little or too much
- Weight and appetite changes
- Tiredness
- Deep sighing
- Feeling weak
- Energized: feeling strong/ invincible
- Muscle tension

- Pounding heart
- Headaches and stomach aches
- Easily shaken by certain sights or sounds (perhaps reminding you of the loss)
- Increased number of colds and infections

Common Spiritual Reactions

- Feeling lost and empty
- Feeling abandoned or punished by God
- Questioning a reason to go on living
- Feeling like you don't belong
- Questioning your religious beliefs
- Feeling spiritually connected to God
- Needing to receive forgiveness
- Finding hope in prayer/spiritual beliefs
- Finding a purpose in life

Common Behaviors and Social Reactions

- Change in job performance
- Being preoccupied and forgetful
- Being more clumsy
- Crying a lot, or more easily
- Blaming others
- Not caring about things you used to
- Wanting to spend more time alone
- Trying to stay constantly active
- Dropping out of social activities
- Pulling away from other's attempts to touch and comfort
- Wanting more attention and more affection
- Seeking approval and assurance from others
- Being aggressive, getting in more fights or arguments
- Showing more creative expression through music, writing, and art

Reference: Donna O'Toole, Facing Change, 1995, Compassion Press