

What to Expect as You Grieve

People are often unprepared for the enormous grief responses that may be part of their recovery after a major loss. Here are some things that you may experience when you are grieving:

- Your grief may take longer than some people think it should take; take as long you need to grieve.
- Your grief may take more energy than you would ever have imagined.
- You may sometimes feel like you are going crazy.
- You may have trouble thinking and making decisions; you may have trouble remembering things.
- Your grief may change as time passes.
- Your grief may show itself in all spheres of your life—psychological, social, physical, and spiritual.
- Your grief may include unexpected feelings, such as anger, guilt, irritability, frustration, annoyance and fear.
- You may have a sense of the presence of the person who died, or think you see, hear, or smell the person near you.
- You may grieve for what you have lost already, as well as for the hopes, dreams and plans you had for the future.
- You may experience acute, unexpected surges of grief that may be triggered by certain dates, events or situations.
- You may be obsessed with the death and preoccupied with the deceased for some time after the death.
- You may search for meaning and question your religious or philosophical beliefs.
- You may find yourself acting socially in ways that are different from how you behaved before.
- You may have physical reactions to grief that you did not expect.
- You may feel confused about “who you are” and may experience low self-esteem.
- You may find that your current loss has resurrected old feelings related to unresolved losses from the past.

These are just *some* of the reactions that people often have after a significant loss. Your experience may be different and may include different reactions. The important thing is that you remember that these responses are **normal** and that sharing them with someone who will listen and not judge you can sometimes lessen their impact.