



Grief Responses

There are many reactions to a significant loss. We each grieve in our own way. Our responses may appear and disappear, may occur in any order, may vary in intensity from day to day, and often occur when we least expect them. Grief responses may surface or resurface long after the initial loss has occurred. The grief response is one of the most natural, yet painful, of human emotions and does not run a predictable course.

Shock/Disbelief: Allows you to let in feelings as you are able to deal with them and prevents you from being overwhelmed

- Dazed
- Intense emotional outbursts and physical reactions

Things to do: Talk with persons you trust, rest, give yourself some slack

Searching/Yearning: Struggling with the reality of the loss

- Emotional ups and downs
- Cannot complete tasks
- Difficulty concentrating
- Restlessness

Things to do: Reschedule projects, exercise, talk to someone who has been through it, or talk to a counselor

Anxiety/Panic: Feeling overwhelmed by the intensity of the pain

- Feeling out of control
- Aware of your own mortality
- Unpredictable
- Life is fragile
- Over protectiveness of others

Things to do: Avoid impulsive decisions. Spend time with people you care about. Spend time in nature.



Anger/Rage: At the loss

- May be directed at: the deceased; the circumstances; the agency; God; abandonment
- Bouts of crying

Things to do: Exercise and physical activity and journal writing. Ask yourself if the deceased would want you to carry this anger.

Guilt/Regret: Struggling with our lack of control over the situation

- “If only I had...tried harder, spent more time, not...”
- Blaming
- Guilt at surviving
- Unfinished business

Things to do: Be forgiving. Ask yourself what the deceased would tell you.

Emptiness/Numbness: Expresses our sadness

- Deep sadness
- Finding ways to say goodbye

Things to do: Do something concrete; for example, make a photo album, write a book, tape a story

Incorporation: Returning to the routine

- Acknowledgment of the loss
- Re-engaging in the future
- Learning to live with the loss

Things to do: Remember special things about the deceased, from time to time. It keeps them close to you. Pass on important things about the deceased to others. Find ways to keep the legacy of the deceased alive.