

**GRIEF****(Bereavement)****BASIC INFORMATION**

The emotional reaction following the death of a loved person, a divorce, loss of a body part or its function, loss of self-esteem (such as losing a job), or other significant loss. Grief is a normal, appropriate reaction to loss. It comes in many forms. Grieving people gradually adjust to their loss and begin to make positive plans for the future. There are no guidelines for the normal time for grieving. Sometimes, grief is serious or long-lasting enough that medical help is needed.

**FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

- Feelings of sadness, numbness, pain, anger, despair, or guilt. These feelings can come and go for months, and may be overwhelming at times.
- Sudden crying spells.
- Hallucinations (such as a sense of having seen or heard the dead person).
- Anxiety and depression.
- Being unwilling to accept the loss; for example, keeping the dead person's room or clothing as if he or she is expected to return.
- Unable to sleep.
- Nervousness and being overactive.
- Stomach problems.
- Tiredness, agitation, tearfulness.
- Increased use of alcohol and other drugs.

**CAUSES**

Grief naturally follows a loss.

**RISK INCREASES WITH**

Existing emotional problems can affect how a person responds to loss. This includes depression, social loneliness, strong feelings of guilt, self-blame, or anger due to one's relationship with the dead person.

**PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

Grieving should not be prevented or denied. It is a normal and expected response to a loss.

**EXPECTED OUTCOME**

With time, the grief lessens and adjustment begins. Your mind, body, and spirit will begin to heal. The feelings of grief may come and go, and will probably recur occasionally for years.

**POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS**

- Difficulty maintaining relationships and jobs.
- Excess use of alcohol or other drugs.
- Chronic anxiety and depression.
- Symptoms that may need medical help include:
  - Severe depression, panic attacks, chronic anxiety.
  - Strong feelings of guilt, bitterness, or remorse.
  - Grief continues for 2 years or more. A person may build a life around the grief and never accept the loss.
  - Talk about or threats of suicide.

**DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT****GENERAL MEASURES**

- Express your feelings following the loss. Don't keep them "bottled up" inside. Look to family and friends for help and support.
- Religious or spiritual help may be of benefit to some people. Talk to your pastor or other religious professional about your feelings.
- Join a grief support group. They are available in most areas. People often find comfort in sharing their feelings with others who have had similar experiences.
- Slowly begin to rebuild your life. Interest yourself in things you have enjoyed in the past or try some new activities.
- Avoid the overuse of alcohol or drugs to suppress the emotions that you are feeling.
- See your health care provider if the feelings of grief are severe, or continue interfering with your daily life and/or work. A physical exam may be done and questions asked about your symptoms and feelings.
- Grief counseling may be recommended. It can help bring about a healthy resolution of grief.
- Don't expect your feelings of grief to follow any pattern or a particular timetable.

**MEDICATIONS**

Your health care provider may prescribe drugs, such as sedatives or antidepressants, for a short time. In most cases, drugs are not needed.

**ACTIVITY**

Normally, no limits. Try to do some physical activity daily.

**DIET**

Eat a normal, well-balanced diet.

**NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF**

- You or a family member has symptoms of grief that are getting worse or not getting better with time.
- Any of the Possible Complications occur.

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Special notes:

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