

G R I E V I N G N O T E S

Keys to Understanding Grief

There are many ideas and theories about how people grieve. Several essential keys to understanding the grief experience are helpful to the bereaved. If you read nothing else about grief, keep these principles in mind and be sure to share them with families and friends.

Grieving is a choice

So much of life appears out of control after the death of a loved one. While the death was never a choice, how one learns to live with that loss is a choice. Grief is painfully hard work that takes determination, patience and daily effort.

You don't get over grief you learn to live with it.

Grief is not something to get over. Grief is the process of learning to live life without a loved one while keeping their memory alive in the heart.

Grief has no timetable.

Current research suggests the intense emotions of grief can last up to 36 months, 3 years! In spite of well intention family and friends, many bereaved individuals may not be ready to move on from their loss in three months, six months or 12 months. It is how the bereaved adapt the loss into their life that is important; not how long it takes.

Grief is unique to each individual who experiences it.

Generally, the loss of a spouse is different from the experience of children grieving the loss of a parent. However, remember that regardless of the kind of bond between the bereaved and the deceased, grief is based on what type of relationship they had with their loved one.

One has to experience the loss before they can move on.

No one can go around grief, over it, above it, or beside it. The only way to deal with the loss is to feel it, experience it, and go through it.

Self Care is important when grieving.

Grief is hard work! It is a journey wrought with potholes, and many peaks and valleys. There is no set course. Encourage the bereaved to take each minute, hour, day, week, and month at a time. Remember talking about their loss can be very helpful!

For more grief information contact Hospice Bereavement Services at 315-265-3105 or by e-mail mjones@hospiceslv.org

Hospice & Palliative Care of St. Lawrence Valley, Inc.
6805 U.S. State Highway Route 11
Potsdam, New York 13676
315-265-3105



Nature of Grief

Grief impacts every aspect of life. The numbing effect of living on automatic pilot for the first couple of months of grief can be disorienting for many. As grief progresses, the bereaved often feel frustrated with the sudden inability to remember or organize daily tasks, they lack energy and develop an “I don’t care” attitude. These are all normal and typical nature of grief.

The first step in helping the bereaved is to understand the different responses to grief. Establishing this foundation of knowledge is an invaluable tool in normalizing and validating the grief experience for individuals. It is always a relief to the bereaved to hear that they are “normal” when nothing in their life feels normal.

PHYSICAL	EMOTIONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Lack of concentration ♥ Numbness ♥ Headaches, body aches & pains ♥ Dry mouth ♥ Crying episodes ♥ Shaky & dizzy ♥ Over sensitivity to noise ♥ Sleep & appetite disturbances ♥ Breathing difficulty ♥ Digestive problems & nausea ♥ Exhaustion & fatigue ♥ Tightness in throat & chest ♥ Restless/over-activity ♥ Loss of interest in sex ♥ Increased heart rate ♥ Lack of muscular strength 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ shock & denial ♥ remorse ♥ hatred ♥ sadness ♥ guilt ♥ anxiety ♥ despair ♥ glad & relief ♥ overwhelmed ♥ panic ♥ loneliness ♥ self pity ♥ abandoned ♥ resentment ♥ anger & hostility ♥ mood swings
SOCIAL/BEHAVIORIAL	SPIRITUAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Acts angry, hostile irritably or short tempered. ♥ Wants to talk about the deceased ♥ Withdraws from the usual social activities ♥ Doesn’t want others to talk about the decease ♥ Avoids friends & family ♥ Avoids reminders of the deceased or visits places that remind survivor of deceased ♥ Loses interest in personal appearance ♥ Sighs, moans, sobs, restless & over active ♥ Inability to organize activity or forgets to finish things. ♥ Increases use of smoking, alcohol, prescribed medications, and/or illegal drugs ♥ Needs to tell and retell the experience of deceased's dying & death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ anguish ♥ Why him/her? ♥ angry with God ♥ Spiritual emptiness ♥ Why me? ♥ How could this happen? ♥ Why did this happen? ♥ questioning priorities ♥ need to establish faith & belief ♥ renew faith & beliefs ♥ uncertainty of life after death ♥ finding meaning ♥ uncertainty of heaven & hell