



Normal Grief Experiences

Physical Sensations

- Stomach or belly hollowness, “butterflies”, hunger, nausea, loss of appetite and other gastrointestinal disturbances
- Weight loss or gain
- Heart palpitations, trembling, or shaking; chest tightness and breathlessness *If these sensations become severe or are ongoing, seek medical attention immediately - call 911 if you have any uncertainty.*
- Throat pain or tightness, feeling something stuck in the throat
- Dry mouth, increased perspiration
- Shakiness, dizziness, or unsteady feelings
- Headache
- Decreased energy, initiative, and motivation
- Overall weakness, physical exhaustion, lethargy, or lack of strength
- A feeling of emptiness or heaviness
- Overly sensitive to noise
- Nervousness, tension, agitation, irritability or other indications of anxiety
- Sense of depersonalization: “Nothing seems real”
- Same physical symptoms as deceased’s illness
- Loss of pleasure
- Decreased sexual desire or hypersexuality

Behaviors

- Sleep disturbances or difficulties (too much or too little, interrupted sleep)
- Appetite disturbances
- Tearfulness, crying, and sighing
- Absent-minded behavior
- Searching behavior, expecting the deceased to be there
- Social withdrawal
- Marked increase or decrease in activity
- Restlessness and searching for something to do
- Increase in illness or accidents
- Change in work performance: tardy, leaving early or working late, not meeting deadlines, shutting office door, eating alone, etc.
- Yelling or outbursts
- Increased alcohol/drug/nicotine intake
- Sloppy dressing, poor personal hygiene
- Activity regarding the deceased: searching and calling out, visiting places or treasuring objects that remind the survivor of the deceased, talking to the deceased’s picture or ashes

Thoughts

- Disbelief: “Oh, no!” “It’s not happening to me.”
- Confusion, forgetfulness
- Preoccupation or obsessive thinking about the deceased
- Finality: “Things will never be the same.” “I can’t go back.”
- Anger: “It’s not fair.” “Why did it happen?” “If only...” “I wish...”
- Forging ahead: “I have to make some decisions.” “I have to get through it.”
- Paranormal experiences: sense of presence, visual, tactile, olfactory, dreams
- Dread: fear of own or another’s death
- Suicidal: “Life has no meaning.” *If you are having these thoughts or feelings, please seek out professional help.*