



GRIEF

*Provided through the Marketing and Development Committee
of the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas*

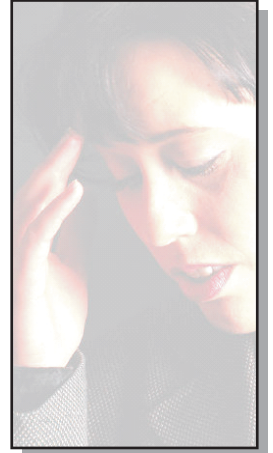
NORMAL REACTIONS TO LOSS

Grief is a natural response to any type of loss. It's the emotional suffering one feels when something or someone loved is taken away. Grief is a typical reaction to death, divorce, job loss, a move away from friends and family, or the loss of health due to illness.

The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried – and there is no “normal” timetable for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever the grief experience, it's important to be patient and allow the process to naturally unfold.

Thinking about reactions associated with grief, one tends to think only of the emotional reactions. The intensity of grief changes over time and through personal growth. Grief differs based on who you are, whom or what has been lost, and how much day-to-day life has been altered because of it.

When coping with a significant loss look for comfort and support from family and friends. Sometimes people need to seek counseling from a mental health professional or a spiritual leader. Talking with other people who have experienced the same situation can also be helpful. As people proceed along their journey, this support will help make some sense out of the feelings, and prepare for what to expect in the grief process, and to help you find meaning, growth, and healing along the way. Whether the loss was recent or long ago, it may still be limiting your ability to participate fully in life.



Grief is a typical reaction to death, divorce, job loss, a move away from friends and family, or loss of good health due to illness.

IMMEDIATE REACTIONS

- **Emotional** - shock, relief, release
- **Physical** - numbness, shortness of breath, heavy chest, empty feeling
- **Behavioral** - denial, crying, listlessness, disorientation

LATER REACTIONS

- **Emotional** - anger, fear, guilt, panic, loneliness
- **Physical** - chest pains, fatigue, headaches, vulnerability to illness
- **Behavioral** - over-reactive, hyper-sensitive, sleeplessness, isolation, a need to relive the details

GRIEF

DEATH - LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

After a death of a loved one, people may feel empty and numb, as if in shock. They may notice physical changes such as trembling, nausea, trouble breathing, muscle weakness, dry mouth, or trouble sleeping and eating.

For weeks after a death, caring families and friends do what they can to comfort and make life as comfortable as possible for those grieving. Gradually, those family and friends return to their normal lives leading those grieving to think "I am alone." The person may become angry - at a situation, a particular person, or just angry in general. Those in grief may experience guilt and regret, is often expressed as "I could have, I should have, and I wish I would have" statements.

People in grief may have strange dreams or nightmares, be absent-minded, withdrawn socially, or lacking the desire to return to work. While these feelings and behaviors are normal during grief, they will pass. Grief lasts as long as it takes one to accept and learn to live with the loss.

Grief may last a few months or several years; the length of time spent grieving is different for each person. There are many reasons for the differences, including personality, health, coping style, culture, family background, and life experiences. The time spent grieving also depends on the relationship with the person lost and how prepared one was for the loss. To help in the process those that are grieving should seek out support groups, counseling, spiritual care, or other friendships to help throughout this time.



Death leaves a heartache
No one can heal,
Love leaves a memory
No one can steal.

5 STEPS OF THE HEALING PROCESS

1. Learn to accept that your loss is real.
2. Make it okay to feel the pain.
3. Adjust to living without the deceased -doing things for oneself.
4. Find a safe place in your heart for your loved one, and allow yourself to move on - looking to the future.
5. Realize you don't have to stop loving someone just because he or she is not with you anymore.

MORE INFORMATION



Mental Health Matters

Toll Free 866-973-2241

www.sekmhc.org

Chanute, 402 S. Kansas, 620-431-7890

Fort Scott, 212 State, 620-223-5030

Garnett, 519 S. Elm, 785-448-6806

Humboldt, 1106 S. 9th, 620-473-2241

Iola, 304 N. Jefferson, 620-365-5717

Pleasanton 505 W. 15th, 913-352-8214

Yates Center 204 S. Main, 620-625-2746

Serving Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Linn, Neosho and Woodson Counties