

DEALING WITH LOSS

Death and loss hurts all of us. It is difficult to find words to describe the shock and pain we feel when we lose someone we loved and cared about. While we acknowledge that sadness is part of the grieving process, we may be surprised that we experience guilt, anger, and/or despair. For a time, we may have a hard time sleeping, concentrating and doing the things we once enjoyed.

Everyone who has the capacity of give and receive love grieves at the loss of a loved one. **Grieving is the internal reaction to loss** – our thoughts and feelings. **Mourning is the outward expression** of grief. In order to heal, we must find ways to mourn.

Individuals grieve in their own unique way. Grieving is our desire to find expression for the confusion and sadness, and to seek answers to the many questions we have after a loss.

Each person has their own experiences with grief in regard to the loss due to the fact that he/she had their own unique relationship and remembrances of the person who is no longer physically and/or emotionally available in the way that they had been connected.

Some behaviors that help to mourn and process grief may include: talking with trusted friends, journaling, creating art, and finding other expressions of emotions rather than holding them inside.

Grief: A Natural Reaction to Loss

Common Emotional Responses to Loss

- Stunned, dazed, or overwhelmed
- Disbelief or denial of the reality of the death
- Feeling vulnerable and unsafe
- Wide mood swings and intense feelings
- Feeling abandoned and confused
- Guilt about things done or not done before the death
- Overly sensitive to comments of others
- More angry and argumentative than usual
- Worries about the health and safety of others
- Inability to feel

Common Behavioural Responses to Loss

- Pain and heaviness in the chest
- Being overly busy to avoid feeling
- Withdrawal from regular activities and friends
- Restlessness and difficulty concentrating
- Disorganized, forgetful, and confused
- Crying at unexpected times and places
- Physical complaints and illnesses
- Numbness and robot behaviour
- Weight loss or gain
- Taking care of others rather than self
- Tightness in throat
- Exhaustion
- Sleep difficulties and fatigue

The Healing Process

Each person experiences grief differently, yet there is a common pattern to our grief.

1. **Initial Awareness**

Shock and disbelief help to get us through the first few days because the reality of what has happened is too painful to comprehend.

2. **Self-preservation and Protection**

Denial, anger, guilt, avoidance, and bargaining are our attempts to understand the brokenness.

3. **Awareness**

Very intense sorrow, accompanied by anguish and despair are present when we are grappling with the full meaning of the death.

4. **Recovery**

As questioning is set aside, we slowly accept the changes that have come into our life.

5. **Growth**

Growth occurs when we begin to invest in the present and future and reach out to others and sometimes take a new or different perspective of things now that we have changed through loss.

Suggestions to Help Yourself Grieve

- **Acknowledge the death.** Don't shy away from the family. A text message, Facebook picture, a note or card, or visit conveys acceptance and love.
- **Acknowledge the pain of your loss.** Admit, "I'm hurting and confused right now."
- **Keep a journal.** You may want to reflect on your journey over the months ahead.
- **Talk about your friend.** Don't be afraid to mention your friend's name in conversations or to laugh about some of the things you did together.
- **Connect with friends.** Stay in touch with other friends and plan to spend significant anniversary days together.
- **Seek help.** Talk with someone who understands the grief you are feeling.

Counselling Support

Langley Hospice Society

20660 - 48 Avenue

Langley, BC V3A 3L6

Tel: 604-530-1115

Fax: 604-530-8851

E-Mail: info@langleyhospice.com

Langley Mental Health

20300 Fraser Highway

Langley, BC V3A 4E6

Tel: 604-514-7940

Langley Youth & Family Services

5569 – 204th Street

Langley, BC V3A 1Z4

Tel: 604-514-2900

Counsellors for Teens in the Langley Area

Please go to our website for a list of counsellors and therapists.

wgsscounselling.weebly.com/mental-health.html

Grief Website:

www.centerforloss.com/grief

www.dougy.org/grief-resources

grievingchildren.org/grief-resources

GRIEVING Suggestions for Teens



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