What is Grief?

Grief is a strong emotion that people experience when they lose someone or something that was close to them or important to them. It is a natural reaction. It can affect everyone differently. There is no time limit to grief. There is no right or wrong way to grieve a loss.

Grief

Grief can occur from any type of loss. This can include death of a loved one, loss of friendship, a break-up, a pet dying, moving away from home, loss of independence, loss of a job, change in staff, and more.

Stages of Grief

The common stages of grief that people experience include denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. These stages can come and go in any order and can last for different lengths of time.

Common Feelings

Some common feelings experienced during times of grief include sadness, anger, anxiety, shock, loneliness, abandonment, frustration, guilt, and numbness. Some may also experience self-blame and/or relief, depending on circumstances around the loss. It is important to note that not everyone will experience the same feelings or with the same intensity. What one feels is that person's truth.

Physical Sensations

There are often physical sensations associated with grief, including:

- Loss of appetite or an empty feeling in the stomach
- Tightness in the chest or throat
- Aches and pains
- Headaches
- Fatigue and insomnia
- Irritability, being overly sensitive to noise
- Tearfulness
- Shortness of breath
- Dry mouth
- Lack of physical strength / feeling weak and lacking energy

It is important to take care of your physical health while coping with grief. As hard as it may be, try to sleep well, exercise and eat healthy foods.

Thoughts Often Experienced While Grieving

- Disbelief – Typically when one first learns of a loss. May also have a sense of depersonalization (nothing seems real)
- Confusion, including difficulties concentrating and inability to organize one's thoughts.
- Forgetfulness.
- Preoccupation – Constant thoughts about the loss.
- For those experiencing a loss through death, there can sometimes be a sensing of the presence of the deceased, visual or auditory.

Behaviors Often Experienced While Grieving

- Change in appetite and sleep patterns
- Absent-minded behavior or restless over-activity
- Social withdrawal
- Avoidance of things that are reminders of the loss
- Dreaming of the deceased or the loss
- Crying
- Visiting places to carry mementos of the deceased

Healthy Ways to Cope with Grief

It is important to find healthy ways to cope as you move through the journey of grief to the point of acceptance.

- Acknowledge your pain and accept your feelings. You can't avoid your feelings forever. Trying to avoid feelings of sadness and loss actually prolongs the grieving process.
- Accept that grief can trigger many different and unexpected emotions.
- Express your feelings in a tangible or creative way.
- Maintain your hobbies and interests.
- Understand that your grieving process will be unique to you.
- Seek out face-to-face support from people who care about you.
- Plan ahead for grief triggers - holidays, anniversaries, milestones, etc.
- Support yourself emotionally by taking care of yourself physically.
- Draw comfort from your faith.
- Join a support group.
- Remember that your feelings are yours. Don't let anyone tell you how to feel.

If you need additional support or someone to talk to, PWSA | USA is always here. Call us at (941) 312-0400 or email info@pwsausa.org.

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