

Losing someone you love is a natural, yet painful, part of life. Grief is the name for the range of emotions that you feel in response to that loss. Grief is also the process of healing you go through as you cope with your loss.

When you lose someone suddenly you do not have time to prepare. As well as sadness and shock you may experience:

- Anxiety
- Nightmares
- Problems sleeping

If your loved one was ill for some time and death was expected, the experience may be quite different. You may grieve before and after death occurs.

There is no correct or incorrect way to grieve. Your ability to process grief is affected by your:

- Personality traits
- Coping skills
- Belief system

Grief does not last for a specific period of time. It may take weeks, months, or even years for you to fully heal. Some people who lose a significant person in their life say they're never quite the same again. Fortunately most people eventually find a new rhythm in life.

If your grief prevents you from getting back to regular activities, we encourage you to reach out to a Bereavement Coordinator. He or she can help you learn new coping skills and provide you with emotional support.

## Coping with Anxiety after Loss

Everyone feels anxious from time to time. For some, grief can cause symptoms of anxiety. If you have had problems with anxiety before, grief can make those problems worse.

You may notice grief-related anxiety:

- When facing a task that you have never done before without your loved one. For example, paying bills by yourself or traveling alone.
- As you begin to adjust to the new reality of your life without your loved one in it.

# Managing Anxiety

Learning to manage anxiety takes practice. Here are some healthy things you can do to reduce your anxiety:

- Exercise regularly. Take walks, or choose other activities that you enjoy.
- Follow a healthy lifestyle. Get plenty of rest. Eat a healthy diet. Avoid or reduce caffeine and alcohol.
- Consider quitting, if you smoke. Ask your doctor to connect you with resources to help you quit.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Learn relaxation techniques, such as those used in yoga or meditation.
- Practice deep breathing exercises to help you calm you down and reduce stress.

To practice deep breathing:

- Find a comfortable position.
- Inhale slowly through your nose and count to 4.
- Exhale slowly through your nose or mouth as you count to 4, letting go of any tension you feel.
- Relax your shoulders, chest, and stomach muscles as you exhale.
- Repeat over several minutes.

## Anxiety Disorder

Grief-related anxiety is normal and usually goes away with time. Symptoms can include overwhelming feelings of worry or panic, and obsessive thoughts that don't go away. Other symptoms include:

- Restlessness
- Fatigue
- Irritability or edginess
- Muscle tension
- Inability to relax
- Sleep problems
- Stomachaches
- Dizziness and shakiness
- Compulsive behaviors (doing the same thing repeatedly, such as checking the lock on a door)

If symptoms of anxiety are interfering with your life or not getting better, call your doctor or Bereavement Coordinator.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor.

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