

Common Grief Reactions

This is not meant to be a comprehensive list but rather a range of common experiences for grievers.

FEELINGS

- Sadness
- Anger
- Guilt, self-reproach
- Insecurity
- Shame
- Anxiety, fear
- Loneliness
- Helplessness
- Shock
- Yearning
- Relief
- Numbness
- Emptiness
- Despair
- Hopelessness
- Bitterness
- Quick mood changes

PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

- Hollowness in stomach
- Tightness in chest, throat
- Sensitivity to noise
- Shortness of breath
- Lack of energy
- Dry mouth
- Rapid heartbeat
- Muscle tension or weakness
- Fatigue
- Decreased resistance to illness
- Heaviness
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Weight loss/gain
- Sleep or appetite disturbances
- Distorted perception of time, distance
- Restlessness, hyperactivity

THOUGHT PATTERNS

- Disbelief
- Confusion
- Preoccupation, ruminating thoughts
- Sense of presence (of the deceased person)
- Lack of concentration
- Lowered self-esteem
- Forgetfulness
- Increase or decrease of dreams
- Search to understand implications of the loss
- Sense of depersonalization
- Memory loss
- Doubt
- Lack of trust in others

BEHAVIORS

- Absentmindedness, difficulty concentrating
- Social withdrawal, isolation
- Avoiding reminders of the loss
- Searching, calling out
- Asking questions
- Sighing
- Crying
- Visiting sentimental places
- Treasuring deceased's objects
- Increase or decrease in activity
- Impulsivity
- Difficulty with daily routines

SPIRITUAL

- Emptiness or reason to live challenged
- Change or destruction of values/beliefs/ideals
- Search for meaning, identity
- Pessimism or idealism
- Experiences of connectedness/wholeness/rebirth
- Compassion