

## Questions Teens Commonly Ask When A Loved One Dies

### Q. Am I Going Crazy?

**A.** Your emotions may seem strange and scary to you. They are simply an expression of what you are feeling now. Grief may surge up at the most unexpected times. These emotions are normal and healthy. For example:

- ▲ Forgetting what was said to you during the time around the death
- ▲ Heart palpitations, dizziness, stomach pains
- ▲ Hysterical crying, outbursts of anger, and even fainting
- ▲ Explosive emotions like hate, blame, terror or rage

### Q. What Is Wrong With Me? I Didn't Even Cry At The Funeral.

**A.** Everyone's grief is expressed in a different way. Some people cry, some scream, some withdraw, some joke, and some even laugh hysterically. There is no right or wrong way to act. Don't be hard on yourself. It is also very possible that at some unexpected time in the future you may cry for your loved one and that's normal, too.

### Q. How Long Will It Take For Me To Get Over This?

**A.** We don't "get over" grief. It is something we learn to live with. "Experts" tend to give a number (6 months, a year, etc.), but the reality is that the healing time is different for each individual. There is no schedule.



## Where To Get Help

If it feels as though you are having a lot of difficulty with your grief, consider counseling or a support group. The best way to choose a counselor is through a recommendation from someone you know and trust. Giving this pamphlet to a friend to read may make the friend better able to help you.

Some organizations that may be able to give you direction or information are:

- ▲ **Association for Death Education and Counseling**  
638 Prospect Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105  
(203) 586-7503
- ▲ **Center for Loss and Life Transition**  
3735 Broken Bow Road, Fort Collins, CO 80526  
(303) 226-6050

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**The Bureau For At-Risk Youth**  
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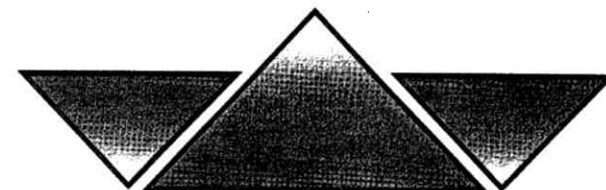


# WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE DIES

## How We React To A Loved One's Death

We live in a society that doesn't like to discuss death or even think about it. So, like most young people, you may be totally unprepared when someone you love dies. You may not know how you should react or if what you're feeling and thinking is "normal."

This pamphlet will attempt to give you some clues to the grief process, and what you might expect. But since everyone's experience is unique, you may not experience everything described here.



## What Is "Grief" And "Mourning"?

**Grief** is how you express your thoughts and feelings about a loss within yourself.

**Mourning** is the process you go through to come to terms with someone's death.

There are several phases you might go through when someone close to you dies. The first aspects of grief are generally:

- ▲ Shock
- ▲ Numbness
- ▲ A sense of unreality

This is the mind's way of protecting you from terrible pain. Since the pain is so extreme, it is impossible to understand the death all at once. This "shock" can last one day or several weeks.

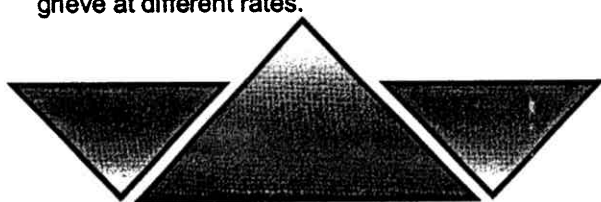
## What Loss Might Feel Like

There are 6 phases you may go through in experiencing loss, and each of us might feel these a little differently and in a different order.

1. The first phase of loss has several of the following:

- ▲ an empty feeling
- ▲ feelings of depression, loneliness and isolation
- ▲ loss of appetite
- ▲ restlessness, difficulty in concentrating
- ▲ feeling guilty at times, and angry at others
- ▲ feeling as if the loss didn't actually occur
- ▲ moodiness

2. The second phase is a feeling of intense sadness and endless crying jags (sometimes for no apparent reason). The sadness can cause fatigue and you may feel okay one minute and very sad the next. This sadness can last a long time. We all grieve at different rates.



3. The next part of mourning is to feel angry. This is probably the most difficult part because the anger seems to have no cause. It seems irrational and stirs up a lot of guilt. It is also difficult for other people to handle. Often, you may want patience and understanding from others when you are:

- ▲ Shouting
- ▲ Finding fault
- ▲ Expressing annoyance
- ▲ Being sarcastic
- ▲ Pushing others away
- ▲ Having little or no patience

You might even become angry at the person who had died for leaving you (that is, dying). It doesn't sound reasonable, but anger doesn't have to be.

4. Sometimes, mourning takes up so much energy that you might feel exhausted. Before the mourning process is finished, you could very well re-experience a sense of unreality and numbness.

5. Sadness often reappears as an emotion at this time. You may feel you have gone through this before and should be finished. But what you feel is what you feel, and it is perfectly normal to feel that way for as long as you need. You may also feel anger again at this time as well. Gradually, these feelings turn into acceptance.

6. Acceptance is the part of mourning when you fully realize the impact of the death of someone close. You are still sad and you still feel the loss. But now you can respond without feeling the stabbing sorrow you did when the death first occurred. You begin to relate to the dead person in the past tense and can speak more easily and readily to other people.

This process can take years to complete, but a healthy mourning has all of these parts to it. Well-meaning friends may try to convince you that these feelings should be "over by now," because they do not understand this is a process.

## How To Start Healing

To heal, you must allow yourself to do the **WORK** of grief. If you don't, the loss will haunt you for months, and even years later.

- ▲ Force yourself to face the loss.
- ▲ Accept the reality of it.
- ▲ Don't drink alcohol or take sedatives to mask sad feelings.
- ▲ Write down your thoughts and feelings.
- ▲ Talk and share your feelings with a sympathetic person.
- ▲ Allow yourself to cry, again and again and again, if necessary.

