EXAMPLES OF NORMAL GRIEF RESPONSES

There are many paths of grief. Experience, age and relationship all influence how one grieves. The following are examples of ways grief can be manifested. Intensity, frequency and longitudinal observations need to be monitored to determine whether response is healthy or unhealthy.

- Feeling emotionally numb. Knowing that the death has occurred but having difficulty believing the death has really happened.
- Feeling tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest or pit of one’s stomach. Having a preoccupation with health.
- Feeling restless and looking for activity. Finding it difficult to concentrate and complete tasks. Finding it difficult to make decisions.
- Having difficulty sleeping and waking early. Dreaming of the person who has died.
- Developing symptoms similar to those of the one who has died. Feeling exhausted and lacking in energy. Feeling low at times of birthdays, holidays and special occasions.
- Telling and retelling stories about the person who has died and the experience of her death.
- Feeling mood changes over the slightest things. Feeling guilty for what was said or not said or for not having done enough for the deceased.
- Being angry or irritated at the wrong person, the wrong circumstance or the world. Feeling intensely angry with the person who has died for leaving. Inappropriately acting-out feelings of anger.
- Experiencing an intense preoccupation with the life of the deceased. Assuming mannerisms or traits of the person who has died.
- Feeling self-pity and not feeling like they belong. Crying at unexpected times. Feeling guilty or at fault for the death. Children often have “magical thinking” or a belief they are responsible for everything that happens around them.
- Feeling intense fear to the point of panic. This is often sudden and unpredictable.
- Feeling overwhelmed.
- Disruption of normal eating and sleeping patterns.
- Needing the consistent presence of a trusted adult.
- Regressing to an earlier age. Behaving as they behaved at a much younger age. This is instinctive, a symbolic acting out of a desire to return to a simpler, safer time.
- The child also may try to act older than he is, especially if one has been told to “be a man or woman” and stop acting like a baby.