

## **Coping with Grief**

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No one is immune to loss and grief. Together let's look at loss and grief; ways to say goodbye, as well as the symptoms of grief and ways to make the journey through grief and loss easier.

Most experts agree that grief is a process, one that takes time and has no rules. We also need to realize that there are many similarities regarding grief--whether it is the result of death, a job loss, a divorce, a house fire or bankruptcy, children off to college or marrying, or any other significant loss or change in life.

When grieving, there can be emotional changes such as shock, numbness and disbelief. The tears seem to go on forever, and you may be irritable, angry, or feel a sense of helplessness. Physical changes can include breathlessness, chest tightness, increased heart rate, dry mouth, and headache initially, especially if the loss is unexpected. There may also be changes in appetite, fatigue, lack of energy or motivation. Your behavior may also change--you may be unable to sleep or you may sleep all the time. You may crave social contact or want to be alone. Just know there are no rights or wrongs for any of these changes.

Your faith can be a great source of comfort at this time; or you may be troubled and ask how could God allow this and you may question your faith. These feelings are normal, and usually talking with your pastor and reading the Bible or joining a support group that is Biblically-based will be helpful.

So, when grief and or loss occurs what can you do?

- **CONFIDE IN SOMEONE** Sharing your loss makes the grief not as heavy. Accept the gestures and the listening, caring ears of others.
- **FIND CREATIVE WAYS TO MEMORIALIZE THE LOSS**
- **ALLOW YOURSELF TO FEEL THE PAIN AND THE CHANGE** Loss of significant others, roles, or possessions can change us. Find opportunities to grow in spite of the changes.
- **USE FAITH RESOURCES** These can include prayer, the support of your pastor and congregation and caregiver group, and attending worship regularly and especially partaking of Holy Communion.
- **MAINTAIN A DAILY ROUTINE**
- **EXERCISE**
- **RELEASE ANGER** Find ways to let go of your anger constructively. Let God be the judge and allow him to preserve and protect, and to administer punishment and forgiveness.
- **AVOID CHEMICALS** Avoid drowning the grief or loss with drugs or alcohol. This can be so easy to do, and yet something that may not be easy to let go of once the grief has subsided.

Jesus said in John 16:22-- "So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."

Remember, grief takes as long as it takes, and that's OK. May God walk with you on your journey, wherever it takes you, and whatever you may be going through.