

Understanding Grief

- Grief, with its many ups and downs, lasts longer than society in general recognizes. Be patient with yourself.
- Each person's grief is individual. You and your family will experience it and cope with it differently.
- Crying is an acceptable and healthy expression of grief and releases built-up tension for the bereaved person. Cry freely as you feel the need.
- Physical reactions to the death of a loved one may include loss of appetite or over-eating, sleeplessness, and sexual difficulties. The bereaved may find that he/she has very little energy and cannot concentrate. A balanced diet, rest and moderate exercise are especially important to you at this time.
- Avoid the use of drugs and alcohol. Medication should be taken sparingly and only under the supervision of your physician. Many substances are addictive and can lead to a chemical dependence. In addition, they may stop or delay the necessary grieving process.
- Friends and relatives may be uncomfortable around you. They want to ease your pain but do not know how. Take the initiative and help them learn how to be supportive to you. Talk about your loved one so they will know this is appropriate.
- Whenever possible, put off major decisions (changing residences, changing jobs, etc.) for at least a year.
- Avoid making hasty decisions about your loved one's belongings. Do not allow others to rush you. You can do it little by little whenever you feel ready.
- You may feel you have nothing to live for and may think about a release from this intense pain. Be assured that many bereaved persons feel this way, but that a sense of purpose and meaning does return. The pain does lessen.
- Guilt, real or imagined, is a normal part of grief. It surfaces in thoughts and feelings. Learn to forgive yourself.
- Anger is another common reaction to loss. Anger, like guilt, needs expression and sharing in a healthy and acceptable manner.