

When to seek help

Because loss and grief are normal life experiences, most people find their own way through the pain with support from friends and family. You may find it helps to meet others who have also been bereaved and join a bereavement group in your community.

Some people can experience significant difficulties in their bereavement. Please talk to your doctor if:

- your grief is intense and unrelenting and you feel your physical or emotional well-being is at risk,
- you have serious and persistent thoughts or plans to end your own life, or
- you feel prolonged agitation, depression, guilt or despair.

Other resources

BC Bereavement Helpline (BCBH)
604-738-9950

www.bcbereavementhelpline.com

The Family Caregivers Network Society

<http://www.fcns-caregiving.org/>

Canadian Virtual Hospice

http://www.virtualhospice.ca/en_US/

Hospice Foundation of America

<http://www.hospicefoundation.org/>

Prepared by the North Shore Palliative
and Supportive Care Program

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Grieving the Death of Someone Close



North Shore Palliative
and Supportive Care Program
www.CoastalPalliativeCare.ca

Grief is our natural response to loss. Learning to live in the world without the person who has died is the work of grieving.

The death of someone close often comes as a shock, even if you expected it. You can't really prepare yourself for the impact it will have on your life. Sudden, unexpected death and death following a serious illness each bring their own kinds of pain, but pain cannot be compared. The worst pain is the pain you're going through and the worst loss is your loss.

How you grieve will depend on many things – the kind of person you are, the relationship you had with the person who died and what support you have in your life.

Everyone's loss is different and everyone's grief is different. You may feel shock, disbelief, confusion, sadness and loneliness. It is normal to feel irritable and angry. Your anger can be directed towards doctors, God or even the person who died. You may feel guilt and regret about things you might have done or not done. You may also feel a sense of relief that the person's pain is over or that the difficult parts of caring are over.

Grief can also affect you physically. You may find that your attention and concentration are poor or that you become absent-minded. You may find it hard to sleep and you may have very

vivid dreams when you do sleep. You may lose your appetite. Expect to feel out of sorts as your body tries to cope with the major changes in your life.

At times, you may feel your loss and grief overwhelm you. You think about what happened, cry and want to talk about the person who died. At other times your energy is taken up with day-to-day events and trying to get on with your life. This is a normal response to loss.

You need time to grieve and time to adjust to a world from which the person you love is now absent.

Grief doesn't follow any set course or stages. Most people have good days and bad days – your grief ebbs and flows. Certain times of the year may be difficult or you may find your grief being triggered by certain memories or events.

Grieving is about remembering, not forgetting

You will find that your grief becomes less intense over time. As you begin to adjust to your loss you may feel guilty that you are forgetting about the person. It is important to remember that moving on doesn't mean moving away from. You can move on and still mourn your loss.

Death ends a life, not a relationship

The person who died is still important in your life. Try to find meaningful ways to keep a connection to them, such as lighting candles, looking at photos, telling stories about them and including their name in your conversations.

Your life has been changed forever by their death, but you may find strength within yourself you didn't know you had. This strength can help you heal from the pain while keeping treasured memories alive in your heart.

For you as you grieve

- Realise and recognise the extent of your loss.
- Try to rest, eat well and keep some structure to your day.
- Be patient and gentle with yourself.
- Accept support, both emotional and physical, from caring friends and family.
- Allow yourself to grieve in the way that suits you.
- Know that any new death can bring up sorrows about past losses.
- Be prepared for change and growth in your life.