

GRIEF AND LOSS

You are faced with a constant barrage of change as you move from childhood to adulthood. There are physical, emotional, social and spiritual changes that take place in a short and erratic period of time.

During each of these transitions, you have to redefine who you are in relation to your families, friends, and yourself. As you let go of some part of your life, like playing with toys, or letting go of childhood companions, there is a sense of loss.

Even at a very young age, there is no shelter from some of the more serious and hurtful events in life. Losing a beloved pet can cause a surprising amount of grief. And all too many children and teens are forced to go through the pain of their parents' divorce or the death of someone they love.

When you add grief to the already full schedule of a teen's life, there just isn't time or energy to handle it all.

If you find that you are reacting to the loss of someone or something that you love or value, you are grieving.

Some Symptoms of Grief

- **Feelings:** Shock, numbness, guilt, anger, panic, loneliness, fear, sadness, relief
- **Physical Sensations:** Feeling like a Zombie, tiredness, pain in the chest or throat, weakness in the muscles
- **Behaviors:** Keeping reminders, problems with grades, suppressing feelings, social withdrawal, being too busy, working to fix or make things right
- **Thought Patterns:** Jealousy, denial, disbelief, confusion, sense of loved one's presence, dreaming of loved one, picturing the loss through time, regrets, wanting to die also

All of these symptoms are normal, though not all of them will be experienced by every grieving person. Likewise, intensity and how long they last will differ.

For more information about SUICIDE, see page 61.

What you need to do to work through this difficult period:

- Understand and accept what is happening
- Spend some time grieving
- Commemorate your loss
- Find ways to go on with life, while never forgetting the loss

What is helpful?

- Getting meaningful support
- Writing: letters or in a journal
- Music: either playing an instrument or listening
- Sports or physical activity
- Spirituality
- Crying
- Sharing memories
- Being treated as if you are normal
- Laughter

It is not helpful when others:

- Say things that are thoughtless
- Say they understand what we are going through
- Avoid us
- Avoid talking about our loved one.

To Help a Friend:

- Listen without saying very much
- Offer reassurance that what your friend is feeling is normal
- Encourage taking care of health issues
- Ask if they would like to talk
- Share stories or memories
- Offer to do things for or with your friend
- Include your friend when they are ready
- Be there

There isn't anything anyone can say to take away the pain, but talking and listening can help to lessen the pain.

If you are grieving a loss, friends and family can be a great comfort to you. But if you want to talk to someone else about how you're feeling, you can call:

The Grief Center(715) 847-2703

Offers support groups and referrals to other grief services, through Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services.

Local counseling agencies offer longer-term support for more comprehensive issues. For more information about counseling options, call:

United Way's 2-1-1dial 2-1-1 or (715) 848-2255 24 hrs./day

Or, search the Keyword GRIEF at: www.unitedwaymc.org/211.htm

Offers information & referral to community services that can help based on your ability to pay.

For more information about COUNSELING, see page 9.



Life goes on, and you are not alone.