

What is Grief?

Grief is a normal reaction to loss.... Loss of any kind. It is a physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological response. The death of a loved one is perhaps the most devastating loss one may experience. Yet grief can occur following ANY changes in our lives. Even positive changes can bring a momentary grief response.

Grief is a complex process, guided by our past experiences, our religious beliefs, our socio-economic situation, our physical health, and the cause of loss. Loss, fear, frustration, loneliness, anxiety, fatigue, lack of energy, guilt, trouble sleeping are part of grief. It is important to understand that grief is NOT a sign of weakness or lack of faith.

Following the loss of a loved one, grief does not magically end at a certain point after a loved one's death. Reminders often bring back the pain of loss. You might be faced with grief over your loss again and again, sometimes even years later. Feelings of grief might return on the anniversary of your loved one's death or other special days throughout the year. Reminders can also be tied to sights, sounds and smells - and they can be unexpected. These feelings are not necessarily a setback in the grieving process. They are a reflection that your loved one's life was important to you.

As you continue healing, take steps to take care of yourself.

- **Be patient with yourself** as you journey through this painful time.
- **Get enough rest.**
- **Accept help when it's offered.**
- **Have a conversation with your loved one.** It's not crazy to do that. Reminisce about your relationship. Focus on the good things about your relationship with your loved one and the time you had together, rather than the loss.
- **Start a journal** and/or a letter to your loved one about some of your good memories. You can add to this journal or letter at any time.
- **Talk to others about your loved one.** Draw friends and loved ones close to you, including people who were special to your loved one. Find someone who'll encourage you to talk about your loss. Stay connected to your usual support systems, such as spiritual leaders and social groups. Consider joining a support group.
- **Allow yourself to feel a range of emotions.** It's OK to be sad and feel a sense of loss, but also allow yourself to experience joy and happiness. As you celebrate special times, you might find yourself both laughing and crying.
- **Treat yourself well**
- **Be aware of your physical health.**
- **Trust yourself.** Do what is right for you.

If your grief gets worse over time instead of better, interferes with your ability to function in daily life, or if you need a little extra help to cope, consult a grief counselor or other mental health provider. Unresolved or complicated grief can lead to depression, other mental health

problems and other medical conditions. With professional help, however, you can re-establish a sense of control and direction in your life, and return to the path toward healing.

Grief counseling at Sheridan Memorial Hospice is provided at no charge. Please call Sandra Overgaard, MSW, 406-765-3708, with questions and for more information.

Sheridan Memorial Hospice: 765-3708

Sheridan County Behavioral Health Coalition: e-mail - scbhcoalition@nemont.net
and website - <https://scbhcoalition.wixsite.com/wellness> for listing of local and area resources.

*Information provided by Sheridan Memorial Hospice,
in collaboration with Sheridan County Behavioral Health Coalition, promoting
individual, family, and community behavioral health awareness and wellness.*