

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

Nothing hurts like losing someone you love due to death, divorce, or separation. Similar feelings often surface after a major life change such as job loss or a move. The ache inside can feel as if your soul will crush under the weight of a deep, paralyzing sorrow. You may find yourself asking how a loving God could allow such a painful thing to happen. The dull sadness often bleeds into denial or anger. Grief is unpredictable, affecting each of us in different ways.

Take Your Broken Heart to God

God made us for intimacy and life – not separation and death. When we grieve, our deepest selves declare that something is wrong with this broken world. Death, divorce and separation were not part of God's original plan for humanity. Our bodies and emotions react against what should not be. Take your brokenness to God, He understands. You may feel alone in our brokenness, but you are not alone. God is always with those who are hurting, and He sees their broken hearts. *"He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds"* (Psalm 147:3).

How Grief Feels

Grief can cause you to feel like you are losing your grip on reality. That's because your body literally experiences physical and chemical changes brought about by loss. You might experience confusion, suffer irrational fear, dread or even paranoia. You may feel empty or numb, brought about by shock. Grief causes some people to experience trembling, nausea, breathing difficulty, muscle weakness, loss of appetite or insomnia. Feelings of anger can also surface, even if there is nothing in particular to be angry about. Many are tortured by guilt, asking what they did wrong, how they might have prevented the loss, or some other form of self-condemnation. But hold on, these intense symptoms eventually will begin to subside, a little bit at a time.

**Grief makes us feel like our emotions have gone
haywire because, in many ways, they have. Over time
however, you will regain a measure of equilibrium.**

Everyone Needs Support

It may be tempting to pull away and isolate yourself thinking no one understands or cares. Maybe it hurts too much to talk about it or to try and put it into words, but having someone to talk to about what you're going through is essential to healing. King Solomon, the wisest man in the Bible, said, *"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble"* (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Find a friend or family member, someone you can trust and who cares, and let them help.

Allow Yourself to Feel the Pain

Grief can trigger many unexpected emotions. No one wants to hurt, and when we do, often our first instinct is to block it out. It is extremely important to embrace your raw emotions and let them out. It is our body's way of ridding itself of the pain and hurt. It's only when we feel our pain are we able to honestly deal with it and move on. If we don't, that pain will reappear somewhere else, usually in an unhealthy way.

Give Yourself Time to Heal

A broken heart takes time to heal. At the time of the loss, almost everyone thinks they will never feel normal again. But God has designed us to heal from our wounds. Some people heal faster than others. But sooner or later you will begin to feel alive again and you will learn to accept this new reality. Don't fight the healing process and be patient with yourself. In time you will begin to reinvest your heart and mind and you will get through this.

Grieving the Loss of a Loved One

It is hard to know what to say or do for people going through grief from the loss of a loved one. A good suggestion is to simply say, *"I'm sorry for your loss,"* or, to say nothing at all and just be with them. Often those grieving their loved ones long to hear the name of their loved one spoken aloud by someone else. Share a memory you have of them. If you don't have memories, ask questions like, *"I am sorry I did not get to meet your dad. I would love for you to tell me something about him."* In some way, just let them know you care and that their loved one has not been forgotten.

It is typical to ask people struggling with grief how you can help them, but often they are too lost in their own sorrow to be able to identify their needs. Sometimes it is better to just step in and — offer to bring a meal, pick up the kids, do the laundry or other housework, help with yard work, stop at the store, take them on errands, or help with other tasks they might not feel up to doing.

© 2008 Inkling Innovations; Revised: 31-Mar-2019

GOING FURTHER

RESOURCES

When God Doesn't Make Sense by Dr. James Dobson

An excellent resource for those who feel betrayed by a good God who allows suffering in our lives.

Someone I Love Died by Christine Harder Tangvald

Provides a positive approach for children to deal with the death in a comforting, non-threatening way and points them to Jesus Christ, the ultimate source of comfort and security.

When Bad Things Happen: A Guide to Help Kids Cope

by Ted O'Neal and R.W. Alley

Teaches children the skills needed for coping with life's biggest challenges and changes, and helps restore their trust that life, after all, is good.

Praying Through Cancer by Susan Sorenson and Laura Geist

A 90-day devotional for women battling cancer – a collection of stories by women who have faced cancer and, with triumphant spirits found comfort & sometimes even joy in the midst of it.

Let Me Grieve, But Not Forever by Verdell Davis

With remarkable honesty, courage, and generosity, Verdell shares from her own experience how to examine grief and ultimately find healing in the process.
