

What helps?

- The grief and healing process can be lengthy and difficult, and incorporating your loss into the fabric of your life takes time, grace and patience. It is important to be gentle with yourself and give yourself the time you need to begin to heal. Gather people around you who are supportive and caring when you need them.

There is an extensive list of support groups in our region available at: www.covenantpastoralcare.com

- Take good care of yourself. While it can be challenging to eat well and exercise, it is important as studies have shown that people who are grieving are more susceptible to illness. Take time for self-care.
- Some people find it helpful to keep a journal.
- Find meaningful ways to memorialize your loved one.
- Ask God for help. He is after all "the God of all comfort."
- You will begin to have good days and moments of joy, and you will begin to be able to remember without the deep, profound pain. Theologically, remembrance is a gift of God.
- Still it can often come as a complete surprise when unexpected moments or events trigger feelings you thought you had dealt with and moved on from. This can happen years down the road. Embrace both the sad and joyous moments, and allow yourself to experience and express these sometimes complex and varied feelings.

How Can I Expect to Feel?

(understanding the grief process)

– ROBERT KOCH

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Perspectives:

- Grief is a process, not a state. It is a process of realization that a part of us has died. It is a process of renewed identity affirming the memories and influences and experiences that will always reflect who we are.
- Further, grief is not an imperfect concession to the weakness of human nature. Rather, "blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)
- During this season your emotions and feelings will more than likely be constantly changing; your feelings may change from day to day, or even moment to moment.
- Every one's experience is unique and our way of grieving is different. (Comparisons are not helpful)
- There is literature that causes us to think of grieving as going through stages that progress in a linear fashion. However, as you reflect on the following array of emotions and thoughts that can make up the grief process, know that it is very unlikely that you will experience these feelings on a certain timetable or as "stages." Grief is more like the ebb-and-flow of the tides.
- We may at times re-experience an emotion we have already felt. Indeed, there may be thoughts and events that trigger an emotion we have not felt for a while. This is all normal and to be expected.
- While it may be difficult to believe now, there will come a time when our heartache will be less painful, and we will be able to incorporate the death into the fabric of who we are with affirmation.

In this season (Ecclesiastes 3:4) you may feel some of the following emotions:

Shock & Numbness

We may experience shock for many different reasons. During this time, we may feel as if we are moving around in a fog or that this is not really happening. It's as if we are anesthetized emotionally. We may have difficulty making decisions and have difficulty communicating.

Helplessness

We may question decisions that were made. We may find ourselves asking: "Why" and "This doesn't make sense" Further, we may feel helpless in not being able to prevent the loss.

Denial & Confusion

We may be confused as to how we should be feeling. Especially if others are not feeling the same way we are and people underestimating the extent of our grief- we may think that something is wrong with us!

Disillusionment

We may have done everything right and this is not the outcome we expected.

Anger

Anger is a common emotion one experiences after a death. We may be angry at medical staff, angry at God, angry with family/friends, angry with the loved one who left us, angry with yourself. Theologically, the Psalms are full of expressions of anger and complaint.

Hannah, who was grieved because she could not have children, told Eli that she was "pouring out her complaint before the Lord." After all, by letting God know how we really feel,

we are not adding to God's knowledge of us; we are simply getting in touch with what God already knows about us, with ourselves as we really are. As we do so, God accepts and affirms us, providing fresh comfort and new strength for living today.

Sadness & Depression

It is common to feel sad or depressed when we have a loss. We may find ourselves crying frequently, sometimes for no apparent reason. We may want to isolate ourselves. Sometimes suffering in silence seems easier than socializing. We may feel lethargic and unable to concentrate or take care of what we need to do each day. *(If depression or sadness becomes too severe and is interfering with your ability to function, please talk to your doctor or see a professional counselor.)*

Guilt and/or Self-Blame

You may blame yourself and question things you did or did not do. Further, at the time of a loss, one may experience regrets or guilt.

Jealousy

It is not uncommon to feel jealousy towards those who have not had a loss or whose lives seem to be normal when one's life has been so disrupted and detoured. It can be difficult to deal with these feelings, especially if those around you do not understand why you are feeling the way you are.

Fear/Panic

You may feel like you are losing control. You may be afraid to leave the comfort and security of your home and go back out into the world of work and other responsibilities.