

# NORMAL AND ABNORMAL GRIEF REACTIONS

## NORMAL GRIEF REACTIONS

It is normal for a person to experience great emotional pain.

### *Introspection is an important part of healing.*

A grieving person may appear pensive and quiet. They may ask the question "Why does death take the young, the beautiful and the good? This isn't fair!" There is no promise that I will live to accomplish my goals. This is normal for the initial phase of grief.

### *May have difficulty eating or sleeping.*

Sleeping and eating are two issues where quantity is not important, but quality is. The body is responding to the pain of your grief. Make sure you drink and eat regularly during the day, and able to stay awake during the day.

### *May have outbursts of anger.*

The grieving person will experience a longing for the person who died. He or she may feel helpless and the anger is a way of controlling this feeling of helplessness. A student may over-react of a poor grade, not being chosen for a special assignment, missing the bus, or to someone sitting in "his" or "her seat. Anger may be directed at someone: God, doctors, family, friends, or teachers. They may not even realize that they are angry but feel irritable and cranky. It is okay to be angry, but it is important to take anger out in a good way. Do not hurt yourselves or others. It is always best to get these feelings out.

### *The person may question his/her emotional stability.*

The grieving person may sincerely believe she/he is going crazy. Most of the emotions and feeling being experienced are foreign to him/her. A younger child may have no previous experience on which to draw. The individual needs informational and resources. Provide names and numbers of local support groups for grieving children and young adults, where they can see their feelings are similar to those of other grieving individuals the same age.

### *The person may experience wide mood swings*

Individuals who are grieving do not choose to be sad, depressed, confused, or inattentive. The smallest reminder of their loss may set them off, and they may need to leave work for a few minutes or the classroom. Crying is a much-needed release when you are grieving. They often feel better when you cry. Sadness happens when they realize that the person is not coming back. Mourning is necessary, hard work and, at times those remembering hurt.

Encourage the grieving to take some time out for play, fun, to recharge emotional batteries. At the same time the person needs to find a safe haven, a special friend with who she/he can sort out all the good and bad memories.

### *The person may express anger at being forced into a new role.*

The griever may experience anger at being...fatherless or motherless...at being the only child...or not having a brother or sister, or no longer being a twin... being a single parent. They have been thrust into a new role. The grieving person may mistakenly feel they must