

# Healing After a Loss

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When someone we care deeply about dies, we may feel sadness, anger, pain, fear, helplessness, or confusion. Such feelings tend to lessen with time and with the support of family and friends.

Although we are never quite the same after a loss, we often find peace in a new version of normal.

We heal from loss by working through the process of grieving. Here are some thoughts that may console you as you work through your loss:

- Grieving is a natural process. It is how we remember and honor the person we have lost.
- It is hard to lose a loved one. This is why the grieving process is such hard work.
- Some days will be harder than others. Special days, such as birthdays, anniversaries and holidays, can be particularly hard.
- Although your grief will always be with you, over time the pain should ease.
- Each loss affects us differently, and each of us grieves in our own way. There is no right way to grieve.
- Some people feel physical changes as they grieve:
  - Changes in appetite can cause weight gain or weight loss.
  - It may be harder to sleep or concentrate.
  - You may feel the need to stay busy.

These are all normal responses that should get better with time.

- Talking through your thoughts and feelings can be very helpful. Sometimes the best person to talk with is a family member or close friend. Other times it may be someone trained in counseling, such as a social worker, minister, or therapist.
- Children express their grief differently from adults. They may laugh and play, even at a time that seems strange to adults, such as a funeral. Adults can help children by
  - encouraging them to express their feelings
  - reassuring them that they are loved and supported.

Answering questions simply and honestly is the best way to help a child after a loved one has died.

## Complicated Grief

While it is normal to grieve a loss, it is not normal for the pain of grief to linger on without getting better. If it has been more than 3 months since your loss and you are still having trouble eating, sleeping, working, or doing any of your regular daily activities, you may have what we call “complicated grief.” It may be time to seek professional help.