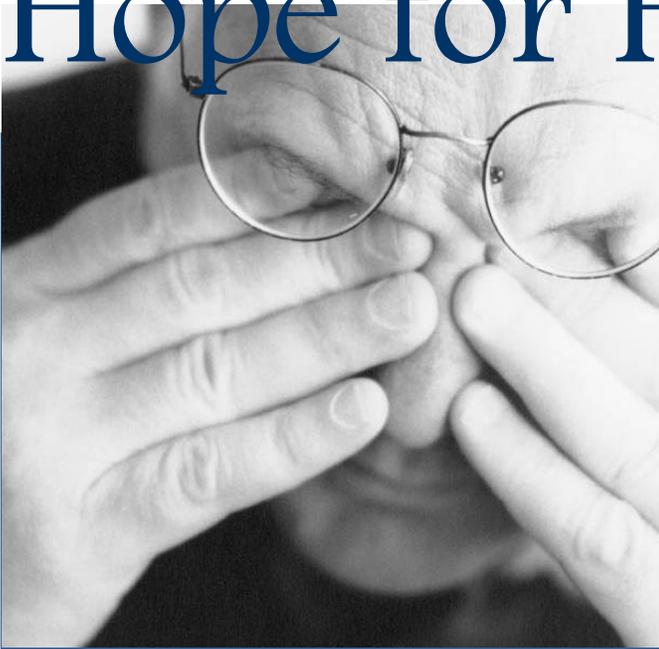


# Hope for Healing



## GRIEF

### The Grief Experience

The loss of a loved one through death can be one of life's most painful experiences. *Grief is a normal emotional and physical response to a significant loss, and there is not a timetable for completing the process.* No two people grieve the same, but each individual will handle grief in their own, unique way.

Grief makes itself known in many aspects or spheres of our lives: through our feelings and thoughts, our behaviors, our physical bodies, and our spiritual belief systems.

#### Thoughts and Feelings:

Normal and expected feelings that tend to emerge include *sadness, shock, anxiety, anger, fear, guilt, loneliness, yearning, and relief.* Additionally, the thought process can be affected by grieving through *disbelief, inability to concentrate, confusion, memory lapses, lowered self-esteem, repeated review of the loss event, sense of presence and/or visions (typically of the deceased person), searching to understand the implications of the loss, questions of self, ("Who am I now?"), and sense of depersonalization ("I walk down the street and nothing seems real, including myself").*

#### Behaviors:

Bereaved persons may experience *sleeping and/or eating difficulties (too much or too little), drug and alcohol abuse, social withdrawal, increase or decrease in activity, avoiding reminders of the loss, treasuring objects that belong to the deceased, and crying.*

#### Physical sensations:

Nerves, muscles, bones, hormones, viscera, senses, the immune system, the heart, and circulation are all affected by the distress of loss or threat of loss. Typical complaints include *hollowness in the stomach, tightness in the chest/throat, lack of energy, shortness of breath, trembling, aches and pains, nausea, weakness of muscles, muscle tension, dizziness, rapid heartbeat, decreased resistance to illness, oversensitivity to noise, gastrointestinal distress, dry mouth, and for many, a deep physical pain, not in one spot, but everywhere at once.* Though these are common, a physician should be consulted if any of these physical symptoms persist.

#### Common spiritual reactions:

Many people suffering loss will *turn to belief systems for help with death-related rituals, prayer support, comfort, and advice on placing the loss within a greater spiritual context.* On the other hand, some may experience a *destruction of beliefs/ideals and reject any notion of God or a Higher Power because they see their tragedy as incompatible with such a concept.* Both, however, develop a heightened sense of *compassion.*

### Bereavement Services Available:

- *Individual grief counseling*
- *Mending Hearts grief support group: open to the community. Please call the number below for current schedule.*
- *Educational resources and referrals to groups in your area available upon request.*

#### Contact:

**J. Sita Lewi, LCSW, ACSW**  
**Bereavement Coordinator**  
**Altus Hospice**  
**11233 Shadow Creek Pkwy,**  
**Suite 123**  
**Pearland, TX 77584**  
**(281)493-9744**

*"I started missing you long before you were gone. I'll keep loving you long after the memories bring you back."*

*-Molly Fumia*





*“If tears could build a stairway,  
And memories a lane,  
I’d walk right up to Heaven  
And bring you home again.”*  
~Author Unknown

# Myths About Grief

and confusion. Yet crying is nature’s way of releasing internal tension, stress hormones, and toxins in the body, which naturally helps us feel better afterwards. Tears are not a sign of weakness. In fact, crying is an indication of the griever’s willingness to do the “work of mourning.”

of energy and confidence, an ability to fully acknowledge the reality of the death, and the capacity to become re-involved with the activities of living. We also come to acknowledge that pain and grief are difficult, yet necessary parts of life and living.

Crying is perhaps the easiest and fastest way to release pain, both physically and emotionally. Tears are not a sign of weakness. In fact, crying is an indication of the griever’s willingness to do the “work of mourning.”

The sense of loss does not completely disappear, yet it softens, and the intense pangs of grief become less frequent. Hope for a continued life emerges as we are able to make commitments to the future, realizing that the person who died will never be forgotten, yet knowing that one’s own life can and will move forward. It’s a new start to a new life, and we will carry our loved ones in our hearts each step of the way.

## Myth #1: There is a predictable and orderly progression to the experience of grief.

Each person’s grief is uniquely his or her own. It is neither predictable nor orderly. Nor can its different dimensions be so easily categorized.

## Myth #2: Tears expressing grief are a sign of weakness.

Unfortunately, many people associate tears of grief with personal inadequacy and weakness. Crying on the part of the mourner often generates feelings of helplessness in friends and family. Out of a wish to protect mourners from pain, friends and family may try to stop the tears.

We live in a society that often encourages people to prematurely move away from their grief instead of toward it. Such messages encourage the repression of the griever’s thoughts and feelings. The problem is that attempting to mask or move away from grief results in internal anxiety

## Myth #3: You should be done grieving after a couple weeks—

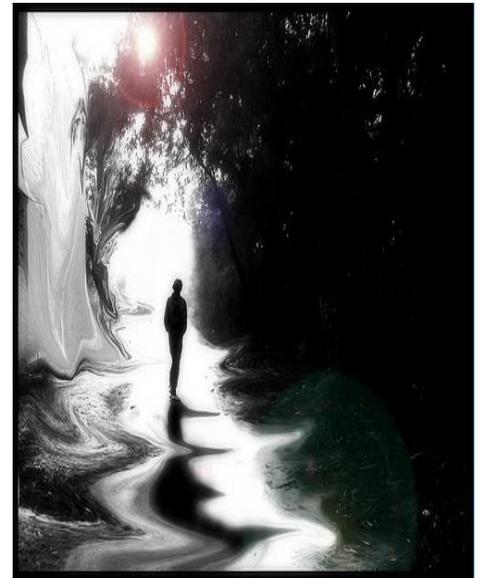
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Grief has no timetable. Each person grieves their own way and on their own timetable. Grief is not a linear process, but cyclical, so expect the emotions to come and go for several months or even years. Healing is a lifelong process, full of bumps in the road, falling down and getting back up.

## Myth #4: The goal is to “get over” your grief

We never “get over” our grief, but instead become reconciled to it. We do not need to resolve or recover from our grief. These terms suggest a total return to “normalcy” and yet in my personal, as well as professional, experience, we are all forever changed by the experience of grief.

With reconciliation, however, we learn to integrate the new reality of moving forward in life without the physical presence of the person who



*“My grief lies all within, and these external manners of lament are merely shadows to the unseen grief that swells with silence in the tortured soul.”*  
~William Shakespeare