

# MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

## GRIEF

losing someone you love

The death of a family member or close friend has a profound effect on your life. The absence your loved one in your life can feel like a void or hole that can't be filled. Feelings of sadness, despair and even anger can seem overwhelming at times. You may feel like you are going crazy, like you can never be happy again. You may also be filled with anger at the person who died or at the

“NO ONE EVER TOLD ME THAT GRIEF FELT SO MUCH LIKE FEAR” -C.S. LEWIS

situation that caused their death. All these feelings are normal. Grief is process that you must work through. There is no right way or right length in which you grieve. Everyone must follow their own process. You are the expert on your grief. It can help to know what to expect as you work through your grief, having the right expectations can help reduce anxiety and ease fears about what you are feeling. The following list of appropriate expectations in grief was taken from [Teen Grief Groups; a grief group curriculum compiled by Scot Johnson, MA.](#)

“\*\*Your grief will take longer than most people think.

\*\*Your grief will take more energy than you would have ever imagined.

\*\*Your grief will involve many changes and be continually developing.

\*\*Your grief will show itself in all spheres of your life ñ psychological, social and physical

\*\*Your grief will depend upon how you perceive the loss.

\*\*You will grieve for what you have lost already and for what you have lost for the future.

\*\*Your grief will entail mourning not only for the actual person you lost but also for all the hopes, dreams and unfulfilled expectations you held for and with that person, and for the needs that will go unmet because of the death.

\*\*Your grief will involve a wide variety of feelings and reactions, not solely those that are generally thought of as grief, such as depression and sadness.

\*\*The loss will resurrect old issues, feelings and unresolved conflicts from the past.

\*\*You will have some identity confusion as a result of this major loss and the fact that you are experiencing reactions that may be quite different for you.

\*\*You may have a combination of anger and depression, such as irritability, frustration, annoyance or intolerance.

## PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF GRIEF

Theresa A. Rando, PH.D

\*Loss of pleasure

\*Tension or Anxiety

\*Tearfulness or Crying

\*Sleep Difficulties

\*Apathy

\*Weight Loss or Gain

\*Shortness of Breath

\*Restlessness

\*\*You will feel some anger and guilt, or at least some manifestation of these emotions.

\*\*You may have a lack of self-concern.”

In addition to having reasonable expectations for yourself during the grieving process, it is important to take care of yourself. Taking care of yourself and being gentle and patient with your thoughts and feelings is essential. Putting pressure on yourself to feel better faster or trying to ignore your feelings altogether will only prolong the process and can lead to some unhealthy habits. It is important to avoid drugs or alcohol. These will only work to temporarily numb your emotional pain and can lead to addiction. So, what can you do to help yourself? Linda Cunningham of TAG TEEN GRIEF INC. suggests the following way to care for yourself.

“\*\*Give yourself permission to grieve. Some days you can handle the feelings that surface, and some days you may "fall apart." These "ups and downs" are a natural reaction to loss.

\*\*Go ahead and cry. Tears are a natural and necessary part of grieving. They are not a sign of weakness; they are a sign that you have loved.

\*\*Express feelings of anger with someone you trust. Suppressed anger can lead to prolonged depression and poor physical health.

\*\*Tell people what you need. People may avoid you because they are afraid that they will say the wrong thing.

When you let others know what you need, they are usually grateful and relieved.

\*\*Be good to yourself. Get the rest you need, balanced with regular exercise and a good diet. You may not feel motivated to do these things now, but they are crucial to your physical and mental well-being.

\*\*Give in ways that you can. Giving to others will assist you in your own healing. Consider joining a grief support group. As you benefit from the love and courage of group members, your presence and personal story will also be helpful to them.

\*\*Write in a journal. Record your thoughts and feelings. Get them "out of your system."

\*\*Do not make major decisions too quickly. Change requires lots of energy. Put that energy into taking good care of yourself.

\*\*Maintain a support system. Whether they are family or friends, make sure you have someone to talk to.

\*\*Believe in yourself. Think of all the reasons your loved one cared for you. These qualities are still present and will help you find strength and meaning in the future”

So, if you find yourself, mourning the loss of someone you love. Remember that the journey of grief is unique to you. There is no one size fits all process of healing. Everyone’s path is different. Be kind to yourself. And as always, if you need help, if you feel lost or overwhelmed in your sorrow, reach out and ask for help.

“GRIEF IS NOT A DISORDER, A DISEASE OR A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. IT IS AN EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL NECESSITY, THE PRICE YOU PAY FOR LOVE. THE ONLY CURE FOR GRIEF IS TO GRIEVE.” -EARL GROLLMAN