GRIEF REACTIONS

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Everyone responds to loss in their own way. These are all normal reactions. Feelings may come and go and vary in intensity as we learn to live with a loss.

Shock, numbness, disbelief: This is unreal, a nightmare – how could this have happened? Numbness and denial buy us time to assemble the support and strength we'll need to face the feelings and process what this loss is going to mean.

Sadness: Loss can bring deep sorrow, emptiness, and despair. It hurts. Expressing this sadness, by crying, talking or some other way, can help to release some of the pain we carry.

Anxiety and fear can well up. Worries about the future and our own mortality can be triggered. While stressful, feelings of anxiety and vulnerability can help us turn to others for support.

Guilt and regret: We can second-guess our actions, thinking we could have done something to prevent the death or brought more comfort in some way. There may be regrets about last interactions. We may even feel guilty for being healthy when someone we care about dies. These emotions highlight the loss of control we feel when death strikes, but they can also propel us to find a meaningful way to respond to the loss.

Anger/blame: A profound loss can upend our sense of universal fairness – this isn't right. Anger may be directed at the circumstances we're in, at ourselves, or others for not preventing the death. Our deepest beliefs can come into question. Anger can be a response to helplessness and lack of control.

Acceptance doesn't mean moving on. It means we've come to terms with the loss. We've figured out where the memory of the person and the past fits now. By integrating the loss into who we are, we're able to begin considering the future.

Emotions	Behavior
Anxiety	Wanting to be alone
Fearfulness	Increased alcohol use
Numbness	Increased drug use
Uncertainty	Restlessness
Depression	Lethargy
Anger	Interpersonal problems
Guilt	Appetite changes
Irritability	Sleep problems
Hopelessness	Reduced sex drive
Vulnerability	Outbursts
Disbelief	Nightmares
Physical	**Thoughts**
Tiredness	Confusion
Weight loss/gain	Forgetfulness
Nausea	Being distracted
Headache	Difficulty making decisions
Aches or pain	Poor judgment
Sweating	Poor concentration
Dizziness	Suspiciousness
Intestinal problems	Past traumas remembered
Breathing problems	Intrusive thoughts

If these reactions don't fade over time, it's important to get help and support. Talk to your doctor or call a professional counselor.

Intense or prolonged grief reactions can lead to thoughts of suicide. If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, get help immediately. **Call 911 or National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).**

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