

Living Through Loss



The death of someone we love is probably the most devastating process a person can ever go through. Although each person will react in their own way, grieving does have an overall natural pattern, which if worked through enables us to heal.

Initially we respond to the shock of loss with a feeling of disbelief: we can't believe that this has happened to us. We still expect the person we have lost to be there. We still long for them, look for them, and may sometimes still feel we see them.

We also have a feeling of numbness, a sense of being on 'automatic pilot'. This can sometimes be interpreted by others as 'coping well'. At the same time we may experience bodily sensations such as exhaustion, aches and pains, lack of concentration, difficulty in breathing and other symptoms.

The gradual realisation that we will never see the person we love again can bring with it a whirlpool of intense, over-whelming, confusing and often contradictory emotions. We may experience some or all of them and painful as they are, we need to experience these feeling to the full, so that we can heal.

We may have feelings of:-

- intense grief.
- guilt; 'if only'. 'If only I had done this or that differently.
- anxiety, fear about the future.
- anger and rage towards others, and those involved in caring for the loved one.
- anger towards ourselves, and the person who has died.
- relief that the pain and suffering has ended.

As time goes by, these intense feelings can subside, and merge into feelings of flatness, despair, depression and loneliness. There can also be a sense of loss of identity and purpose.

Gradually we begin to realise that we have to live life without the person we have lost. We will never forget them, and they will always be a part of us, but we will have to let them go, and move forward to a new life.

We may not always travel through grief in exactly the way stated, for we all grieve in our own way, and it does take time.

Caring for ourselves

- Emotionally we need to give ourselves enough time to grieve. To feel is to heal. Writing our feelings down, and talking to some we trust is helpful.
- We need to take care of ourselves physically: eating regular meals, taking exercise, checking health worries with the doctor.
- We need to accept offers of practical and emotional support, if we feel it is right for us.
- As time goes by we need to allow ourselves to get to know new people, and try out new experiences.

A Christian view

Our experience of grief will be conditioned by how much we understand the Christian faith. The Christian knows that death is not the end for the inner person. The spirit of one who has died 'in Christ' does not die, but rather goes to be with Jesus.

The Christian also knows that death is not the end even for the body. We believe in a bodily resurrection. What is more, the living Christ stays with each grieving person. If we ask for his presence and accept him he will stay with us to comfort and help. The resurrection of Christ is a sign of hope for all who suffer bereavement.

With Jesus' help our life can be renewed and deep grief can give way to quiet acceptance and hope.

