

What is Grief and Mourning?

Grief is the full range of emotions, thoughts and experiences one endures when someone they love dies. It is important to recognize that this may entail a wide variety of emotions and experiences. Grief may trigger responses that are physical, mental, behavioral, emotional or spiritual in nature.

What are some of the emotions, thoughts and experiences you have noticed in your grief?

Mourning is the expression of the emotions and thoughts related to grief. Most individuals who suffer the loss of a loved one will grieve, but not all will externalize their grief. To mourn is to release those emotions in order to allow for healing. This release can be through emoting (crying, etc.), talking, writing, physical activities (running, exercise) or any other healthy method of release.

What are some of the ways you express all the emotions you noted above?

Do you have ways to record or express your thoughts and feelings through creating (art, music, knitting) or writing (journaling, short stories, poetry, etc.)?

What is Bereavement?

Bereavement is the state of grief and a time period of mourning after a loss, generally referring to the loss of a loved one. Bereavement work involves the truthful and honest experiencing of the full range of emotions which occur during one's grieving process. Every individual's grieving process will be as unique as their relationship with their loved one. Throughout bereavement, grief can be cyclical, meaning that it can come and go. One moment may be different from the next and it sometimes feels as though you are moving backward along this road. **You would not be the only person feeling that way.**

What has helped you through emotionally difficult times in the past?

What do you feel you would need in order to feel supported during this time?

Who in your personal life do you feel may be able to offer you that support?



Be patient with and compassionate toward yourself. There are a lot of things that will need to be done following the death of a loved one. Do what you can, as you can. Allow yourself to rest and distract yourself with things that may offer you any possible relief when you are able. Honoring your needs is honoring to your loved one.

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You are not alone.

You have received this handout because someone you love has died. We want to extend our deepest and most sincere condolences. We have tried to imagine what would be most helpful to you in this moment and quite frankly, we can't. We can't imagine what you might be thinking or feeling, but based on our hospice and bereavement experience, we want to provide some information and guidelines which might offer you some support during this time. It is our hope that you find something here that you can use right away, or perhaps something will resonate with you a week from now. Read this in small doses or read this all at once - this is your time to do what's best for you. *Just please know that you don't have to walk this road alone.*



Where to Turn When a Loved One Dies:

The people in your life who know you best and care for you can go a long way in providing support during such a difficult time. Every individual experiences loss in their own way and has their own idea of what providing support looks like. Therefore, it becomes important to tell them how they can help to support you. Some examples of how support can be provided include regular “check-ins” and simply asking how you are, spending time with you and including you in activities or events or to be understanding if you do not feel up to participating in activities or events, offering to provide meals and/or assist in daily responsibilities (i.e.- household/yard maintenance, child supervision, etc.), reminiscing about favorite memories of your loved one or engaging in some of you and your loved ones’ favorite activities to honor them. Let them know specifically how they can be a support to you and what would be most meaningful to you at this time. These needs may change over time which makes it helpful for everyone involved to continue to speak openly.

Peer support groups can be a tremendous resource during challenging times. They provide an opportunity to share your story with others as well as to hear from others who have experienced the loss of a loved one. While each individual loss and experience is unique, much can be gained from connecting with others who are also walking this road of grief. Our group schedule can be found on our website as well as links to connect to other groups throughout the state of New Jersey. In the event you cannot access our online resources, please contact our Bereavement Center to speak with our staff at 973-948-2283.

If you find yourself continuing to struggle during your grieving process and feel you may benefit from some individual support, our Bereavement Center offers one-on-one counseling. Sometimes it helps to talk through experiences and emotions in order to gain more explicit awareness of them.

The most important thing to remember during this time is to be compassionate toward yourself. Losing someone you love can change your entire world. It becomes important to honor and experience your needs and emotions as they are, not how you or anyone else wants them to be or thinks they should be. This is your time to do what is best for you. Please know you do not have to walk this road alone.



What is needed during Bereavement?

Be self-aware. There are a wide variety of emotions you may experience and they may change often and quickly. Try to allow yourself to experience and express these emotions in healthy ways (talking, writing, crying, etc.) rather than trying to be “strong” or to avoid or mask them. These emotions are part of a normal, natural process of grief which one experiences after a loss. The manner in which you typically experience, express and communicate emotions may or not be present during bereavement; these may be completely different during your grieving process. Know that this is not abnormal and there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

Be supported. Allow people in your life to support you. Ask those you trust to help you take care of getting things in order and planning your loved one’s memorial and/or funeral arrangements. Accepting offered support can be difficult for many people and asking for it can be even more difficult. Allow yourself to depend on others as needed throughout your grieving process.

Memorialize your loved one. It can be helpful to memorialize the relationship and all that you have gained from your loved one while trying to find a way through what was lost. It is a reminder of everything they were and is another way to honor them and to provide yourself with meaningful support. Memorialization may look different to different people. You may find some comfort from engaging in rituals and including them in meaningful events and activities (i.e. having a table setting for them during holiday meals, family candle lighting ceremonies, etc.). Perhaps creating a memorial in your home by arranging pictures, meaningful possessions or items (i.e.- watches, glasses, books, etc.) in a specific place for you to visit and remember them may be helpful. Any activity, practice or item which will provide you with an opportunity to honor and remember your loved one may help to provide you with comfort during this challenging time.