

Tip sheet

Grief

Loss is experienced when someone or something we value is no longer available to us (e.g. death or redundancy).

Grief is our total response to the emotional experience of loss. Pay your essential bills first.



Types of loss

- **Actual:** can be recognised by all.
- **Perceived:** felt but not tangible to others.
- **Situational:** experienced as the result of an unpredictable event.
- **Anticipatory:** experienced for a loss yet to take place.

Factors affecting the grief response

- Degree of attachment to the lost
- Meaning of the loss to you
- Circumstances/nature of the loss
- Your socio-cultural resources
- Your personal resources and stressors.

Functions of normal grieving

Although each person's grief experience is different, there are some common responses experienced by the majority of people. It's important to remember these are normal

reactions in a normal person to an abnormal life event. People experiencing grief are likely to feel and project a range of emotions as they work through the grief process.

Emotional needs

Some of the most important needs a grieving person has are:

To feel support

We need to recognise that loss raises all sorts of feelings and that to cope we need the support and understanding of others.

To face reality

The process of recovery is linked directly to acceptance of the loss. Acceptance will not come until the reality of the loss is faced.

To express feelings (emotional release)

Grieving people should be allowed to express their feelings. This might mean talking, tears or other emotional displays.

To move forward

This means moving towards the re-establishment of self (adjusting to a new life and ongoing living).

Common responses to grief

Some of the normal reactions to grief include:

Emotional

- Shock
- Fear
- Anger
- Sadness
- Guilt.

Physical

- Sleep disturbances
- Health-related problems.

Thinking

- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Confusion and lack of concentration
- Memory problems.

Behaviour

- Withdrawal
- Poor motivation
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- Loss of appetite or over-eating.

8. DO recognise the intensity of grief that will be experienced at significant times (e.g. Anniversaries, Christmas)
9. DO encourage people to support one another
10. DON'T prevent the person from expressing their guilt or anger if they need to
11. DON'T stifle the person's desire to talk
12. DON'T personalise knock-backs to your efforts
13. DON'T give trite answers to questions.

Self-care for supporters

Taking care of others requires you to respect and care for yourself.

- Consider your own values, beliefs, perceptions and experiences
- Consider your own levels of stress.

Supporting a grieving person

1. DO listen
2. DO acknowledge everyone's unique experience
3. DO see that nobody has to justify themselves
4. DO realise the person has suffered
5. DO allow the person time to grieve
6. DO encourage the griever to express emotion
7. DO remember that many who give support immediately after a loss may be delayed in working through their own grief.

Contact

0508 664 981
assistance@vitae.co.nz
www.vitae.co.nz