



What to Expect During Early Bereavement

Support and Care for those with Terminal Illness

The grieving process is long and the length cannot be predicted. You may feel overwhelmed or simply numb. With time, these feelings become more tolerable.

- It is normal to experience periods of disbelief in addition to deep grief and longing. Your heart, mind and body are struggling to grasp the reality of what has happened.
- Not wanting to believe that the death has occurred and listening for the loved one to return, to call or for familiar sounds is not unusual. This is a normal phase experienced by many. It will pass as the reality of the loss is absorbed.
- Many people have feelings that are confusing and contradictory: sadness, anger, guilt, regret, fear and sometimes the absence of feelings entirely.
- In the early stage of bereavement concentrating, sitting quietly, watching TV, reading or even sleeping may be difficult.
- Many factors influence the course of bereavement: prior losses in the household, availability of emotional support or the amount of preparation the family had for the illness and death.
- It is not necessary to forget and “move on” to complete the mourning process. A strong but realistic continuing memory of the deceased is beneficial, especially for children.
- Some people cope well early in bereavement and are surprised to experience a greater sense of loss several months later.
- Bereavement can be like a roller coaster with ups and downs. Certain anniversaries and memories can temporarily trigger deeper feelings of loss.
- Bereavement entails losses in many forms: For instance, losing a spouse not only means not having one’s life partner; it might also mean the loss of a co-parent, the person who shared the household duties, a best friend.
- Children may not appear to be grieving but they definitely mourn. Grief for them can be experienced in brief spurts interspersed with normal play and school activities.