

# Someone Close To You Has Passed Away



**The death of a loved one is one of the most painful events imaginable. Like other major losses, the death of someone dear to us brings about profound changes in our lives. In such times we may question our own connection with life, or the meaning of life itself.**

**Mourning involves learning to make peace with this loss, and making sense out of something that does not make sense. This learning experience usually does not happen quickly or without effort. Maybe you would like to just pretend that nothing happened.**

**Whatever the case, learning to live with the loss of someone you care about takes time. We must confront our own mourning in an effective manner.**

## **What is mourning?**

Mourning varies in its length and intensity, depending on the person and situation. We must learn to adapt to life without the presence of a loved one. While painful, this period is normal. It is likely while in mourning to experience intense emotions, mood swings, momentary destabilization, demobilization, or a lack of motivation.

These reactions are normal and healthy. They help us to accept that a relationship with the deceased is no longer possible, and to focus our energies toward the future.

## **What should you expect?**

As with any loss, it is normal that you must learn to live with this death by going through the stages of mourning. While these stages may appear to be linear, bear in mind that we normally progress by taking forward and backward steps. It is natural that the time required in various stages of mourning will vary from person to person.

At first, it is common to be in shock, complete disbelief, or even numb. We do not understand what is going on. Often, we will not admit what has happened. It may feel like we are divided: we understand it with our head, but do not accept it emotionally.

Afterwards, or sometimes simultaneous with the first stage, it is normal to feel anger toward the person who has passed away and left you alone to cope with this painful experience. It is also possible that you feel angry with yourself for what you did not do for the deceased, angry for not knowing how to help, or even angry for experiencing these feelings. Some might feel guilty for feeling a sense of relief, as if the fact that this person's passing lifted an enormous burden, especially if the death was neither sudden nor quick.

Sadness and disorganization are elements of the next stage. We gradually become conscious of the loss and of all that this death forces us to leave behind. It is then normal to feel sad, depressed or teary-eyed. Some experience loss of appetite, sleep disturbances or other physical reactions. Others experience guilt or remorse. We are tempted to make sense out of something that simply does not. Often, we must accept that we need to talk about our feelings with someone, to admit and to understand how this death has affected us.

Reorganization is the last stage. By consciously accepting your feelings and every disruption that this death brought about in your life, you will feel more at ease with the loss, and learn to cope with the situation. Throughout this process, it is healthy to seek the support and encouragement of others to overcome your grief.

## What can you do?

Different strategies can help you to learn to live more effectively with this experience.

1. **First, do not try to speed up your mourning,** or the mourning of those around you. It is normal to need time to accept the loss.
2. **Do not hesitate to talk about your feelings or reactions with people who may be close to you.** Ask them for help. If you talk about your feelings, you will likely recover faster from the loss.
3. **Be attentive to others experiencing the same loss.** In this way, you will benefit from mutual support and understanding.
4. **Take care of your physical health.** It is possible that your grief will cause stress and sickness. Consult your physician if you are worried about your health.
5. **Take time to reflect on other losses that you have suffered.** You will likely discover similarities. This should normalize what has happened, and give you hope.
6. **Accept that this death may have changed your life.** You have to carry on with the best of your abilities.
7. **Gradually resume your favorite activities,** particularly those that energize you or 'recharge your batteries.' Develop new interests, make new friends.
8. The loss of a loved one is a painful experience. It often leaves us in a state of helplessness or confusion. **Remember: it takes time to learn to live with such an experience.** Also remember that many resources are available, should you need help.