

Reactions to Grief

These are some normal responses to the loss of a loved one. It is natural to have a few or more of these symptoms. As time passes, things may feel different or change.

Body (Physical Reactions)

Some reactions to grief happen in your body. You feel more or less active than usual, have problems sleeping, feel restless or feel tired. You have pain or other physical problems, like headaches, stomach pain, nausea or chest pain. You notice changes in your appetite, or that you gain or lose weight. You notice yourself crying, sighing, or having shortness of breath or tightness in your throat.

Feelings (Emotional Reactions)

Other reactions have more to do with your feelings. It is also common to feel sad, angry, guilty or afraid. You feel numb or lonely. You feel empty and disconnected to the present moment. You feel like you have been abandoned. One day you may feel relieved, and another day guilty or anxious. It is easy to become upset or frustrated.

People (Social Reactions)

It can be hard to connect with other people when you are grieving. You might not feel interested in seeing people at all and want to avoid people. You do not want to call people on the phone to talk. You feel like you are keeping to yourself too much. Or, you might feel like you are relying too much on people, or that you feel more sensitive than usual. Be patient and remember that this will change over time.

Actions (Behavior Reactions)

Grief can cause you to act in ways that you would not usually act. You find that you are forgetful, that you think more slowly than usual or that you wander around. You have dreams about the person that died, sense their presence or find that you are looking around for them. You try not to talk about the person who died to try to avoid making other people uncomfortable, or you have a strong need to talk about the death.

If you are worried about any of the feelings or reactions you are having, it is a good idea to talk to a person who is close to you or to a professional. The most important thing to remember is that grief is a natural response to loss, and you need time to adapt to the grief process.

To Learn More

- Journey Program
206-987-2062
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.



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Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201. This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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