

Tip Sheet



Grief and Loss

WHAT IS GRIEF?

- ✦ Grief is a normal response to loss. Often the most painful loss is the death of a person you love, whether sudden or anticipated.
- ✦ Grief is painful and at times the pain may seem intolerable. It may be a combination of many emotions that come and go, sometimes without warning. Grieving is the period during which we actively experience these emotions. One thing is certain: grief does not follow a schedule, but it does ease over time.
- ✦ Some people experience several of these emotions, perhaps in a different order or in different degrees.
 - Shock
 - Denial
 - Anger
 - Guilt
 - Sadness
 - Acceptance
- ✦ Symptoms of grief may include: irritability, difficulty sleeping, poor appetite, weight loss.

HOW CAN I HELP A FRIEND WHO IS GRIEVING?

- ✦ Recognize that everyone grieves at a different pace. Help your friend take one day at a time.
- ✦ Keep your friend company. You don't need to say anything profound or do anything earth shattering. Your greatest help may be your presence.
- ✦ Initiate contact and activities. It is important for you to respect your friend's privacy and space but he/she may need help thinking of activities to keep busy.
- ✦ Allow your friend to show strong emotions.
- ✦ Be on the look-out for destructive behaviors. Traumatic loss can lead some people into depression, alcohol or drug abuse. They may need you to keep an eye on them while things are especially tough.
- ✦ Don't be afraid to use humor. Laughter is good medicine.
- ✦ Help your friend find support and inspiration. Often, a poem or song will speak in ways that no one else can. Also, talking to someone who has survived a similar loss can help your friend realize he/she is not alone in grief.
- ✦ Encourage your friend to seek professional help such as individual or group counseling for grief.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM GRIEVING?

- # Keep your regular schedule
- # Reach out to friends and family
- # Talk to someone about your pain and sorrow
- # Eat well and exercise
- # Get extra help if you need it (school counselor, youth group leaders)
- # Do something that you love to do or that you find comforting (listen to music, rent a movie)

SIGNS SOMEONE MAY NEED EXTRA HELP

- # Symptoms of chronic depression, sleeping difficulties, restlessness and low self esteem
- # Academic failure or indifference to school-related activities
- # Deterioration of relationships with family and friends
- # Risk-taking behaviors such as drug and alcohol abuse and fighting
- # Denying pain while at the same time acting overly strong or mature

RESOURCES

<http://www.centerforloss.com/articles.php?file=helping25.php>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/FY879>

http://sss.usf.edu/respondingtotragedy/Coping_with_Tragedy/default.htm

www.adapp.org/documents