



## GRIEF: sharing the burden

Grief is a healthy, natural and necessary reaction to a significant change or loss in life. Many situations can result in grief: death of a family member or friend, divorce, injury, loss of a job, or giving up a dream.

You and your family can do a great deal to help those close to you cope with grief. In general, try to place yourself in the grieving person's situation. Decide what type of support would be most helpful.

Grief is a painful experience. The time it takes for an emotional wound to heal varies from person to person.

Many experts like to list stages of grief, but there is no real order of emotions in the grieving process. It is more useful to think of grief as a cluster of reactions.

You can help by understanding what grieving people commonly experience.

### Common feelings

An immediate response is probably shock and numbness. Often it is difficult to believe the loss has taken place.

Feelings of anger toward themselves and others for not preventing the loss are typical.

It is common for those grieving to blame themselves for something they did or didn't do prior to the loss.

Feelings of depression are often prevalent. Many times grieving people are unwilling to perform even routine tasks because they are so overwhelmed by their loss that they lack motivation in day-to-day activities.

Increased responsibility leaves the grieving person wondering where to begin or turn. Eventually the grieving person will begin to accept the loss, remember with less pain and focus on a future filled with hope.

Helping partnerships are essential to easing and sharing the burden of grief. For example, immediately following a change or loss, the grieving person needs to accept support from

family members, friends or a minister. However, gradually family members and friends return to their lives. But for the grieving person, life has been changed permanently, and there are many adjustments to be made. As numbness wears off, comforting friends and family members often may no longer be close by.

### How to help someone with grief

- **Show you care by giving the person a hug.** Sometimes that says more than words.
- **Empathize.** Be a good listener.
- **Be patient.**
- **Talk about similar experiences** you have had.
- **Provide practical assistance** with everyday chores, such as cooking, grocery shopping, cleaning and laundry.
- **Remember that recovery takes time.** People often need the most help after the initial shock of a loss. Continue to provide support for as long as it's needed.

### For more help

If you feel your loved one may need additional advice, a counselor can listen and help with setting new goals and adjusting to the loss. To make an appointment, call (810) 257-3740. In an emergency, call Crisis Services at (810) 257-3740 or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where a counselor is available 24 hours a day.

Other Genesee Health Center handouts include: *Easy listening, Finding hope beyond grief, helping to survive a loss, you are not alone, what is good mental health? SOS: Signs of stress, Art of stress reduction, Families facing loss* and *Helping kids to cope with grief.*

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