

Helping Others Deal with Grief/Loss

After a grief/loss event, many people will experience the stages of grief. This is a normal life process, which can cause conflicting feelings. The goal is to help the person through the steps providing them support. Moving through the steps has no specific length of time. Each person will react individually. What may cause difficulties is when the person has stopped processing and begins gets stuck in their reactions or feelings. In this case it will take longer for the healing to take place.

Here are some common reactions that express the grief process.

- ◆ Mood swings-irritability, short-tempered
- ◆ Increase/Decrease in social isolation
- ◆ Changes in sleep and eating patterns

For many, the loss may trigger reactions to previous losses in their lives and they may experience the stages of grief again. Those individuals will likely experience intense feelings if the initial loss was not processed in a healthy way. This can lead to more traumatic stress. Here are some common indicators for a person that might need support.

- ◆ Recurrence or reliving the event for a month or longer
- ◆ Avoidance of situations that are reminders of the event
- ◆ Sleep disruption
- ◆ Anxiety and irritability
- ◆ Significant social, occupational distress

Suggestions:

- ◆ Validate the individual responses to loss
- ◆ Look for ways of providing support to the family
- ◆ Communicate and keep in touch
- ◆ Encourage them to take care of themselves
- ◆ Recommend that they seek appropriate resources for help

Things to Consider:

- ◆ Do not offer clichés such as: “It was God’s will”, “It is all for the best”, or “You’ll heal with time”.
- ◆ Provide less words and more “presence”.
- ◆ Let the person who is grieving initiate any discussion and when they do, spend most of the time listening.
- ◆ Let them work through the grief in their own timing (don’t try to hurry them).
- ◆ Don’t be afraid of experiencing their emotion or showing a little of your own.

For more information call: 1-888-321-4433