

AREA RESOURCE GUIDE

(Services listed are provided free of charge, or have income-based scheduling)

Homicide Support/Advocacy

Compassionate Families
354-0007, 721-3326
Life Is Valuable
908-0989
Parents of Murdered Children
262-0866, 713-9683
Victim Services Center
630-6300
Jax. Sheriff's Office Victim Advocate
630-1764

Abuse (Domestic)

24 Hour Hotline
1-800-500-1119
Hubbard House
Emergency Shelter
& Counseling
354-3114
Quigley House (Clay County)
1-800-339-5017

Compensation (victim)

Victim Services
630-6300
MADD Victim Services
388-0664

Consumer Fraud

State Attorney's Office
630-4994

City of Jacksonville

Consumer Affairs Division
630-3467

Detoxification

Gateway Community Services
387-4661

Family

Family Nurturing Center of Florida
389-4244

Legal Assistance

Legal Aid
356-8371

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

(MADD)
388-2455

Rape

Sexual Assault
Response Center
244-RAPE (244-7273)
Office
244-4600

RAPE Recovery Team

722-3000

State Attorney's Office

630-2400

Trauma Counseling

Women's Center of Jacksonville
722-3000
City Victim Services
630-6300

Youth Crisis

Youth Crisis Center
The Safe Place
766-3040

Grief – the normal reaction to loss



Answers from Janie

by Janie Simpson, L.C.S.W.

This is the first in a series of articles about a subject people do not want to think or talk about – grief. Those who are grieving do not want to talk about it because they think they will feel sadder. People who are not grieving think it will make them feel pain or somehow they might catch the misery of grief like people catch the flu. Even though most of us would like to avoid grief, it is probably the emotion we will all have to experience some time or another.

In this first article the normal bereavement reaction will be explored, as well as the complications of sudden loss. We will also discuss some ways to seek help. In following months we will talk about how teenagers grieve, children's grief, and how to help when someone you care about is grieving.

The common experience for most people when there is a loss is called the normal

bereavement reaction. Researchers John Bowlby, M.D. and Murray Parkes, M.D. identified four phases people go through. This does not mean they move from one area to the next, but rather will experience the phases sometimes together, or go back and forth from one to another.

Most people experience shock and numbness when they are confronted with the news that a loved one has died. They describe feeling as if they are in a fog or watching themselves go through the motions of their life. They are stunned and cannot take it all in at once.

Another phase experienced early on is the sense of searching and yearning for the person who has died. Often individuals feel as if they see or hear the deceased. They know it cannot be true, but they want it to be true so much that they will turn to look at every person who could possibly be their loved one. People think they are losing their minds when they experience these sensations. They feel unsure of themselves.

Another phase that lasts a

long time is the feeling of being disoriented and disorganized. Grieving people have difficulty concentrating on the details of life. They have trouble sleeping and their eating is affected. There is often a weight loss or weight gain. They will have very difficult times when the piercing reality of the loss will overwhelm them and they know their loved one will not return. They have many physical complaints and their immune system does not function as well as normal.

Eventually and gradually a person begins to reorganize his or her life around the loss. This does not mean they no longer feel the sadness of the loss, but they begin to have moments when the pain is not at the same level as before. This might just be for an hour or two and then the loss hits again.

For sudden and traumatic death all of these reactions are more significant and last longer. These reactions can be accompanied by reliving the events around the circumstances of the death. The person could also feel guilt and have many questions or fears about how the death occurred.

Some of the grieving symptoms get worse around significant days like birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, or other important days in the family. Grief has been described as waves in the ocean that hit you and knock you down when you don't expect it. When you get knocked down, you spend time struggling and feeling as if you will drown and then you get back up on your feet until the wave knocks you down again.

There are some helpful things to do. One is to know that grief is not an illness even though you feel sick. It is a universal reaction to loss of a loved one or object. The above describes what most people go through.

It helps to have someone you can talk to and not have to worry about upsetting them. This could be a friend or a counselor. Be sure the counselor has training in grief counseling. Grief takes energy to experience and to work through; it does not go away just because it gets buried inside.

Grief support groups are
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