



When a Loved One Dies

COPIING WITH LOSS

You have lost someone you love. You never realized that you could hurt so much. Their death is one of the cruelest blows you will be dealt in life. Yet death is a normal part of everyone's life and eventually accepting (not forgetting) the loss is an essential goal. How can you cope with the loss?

How Death Affects You

How deeply you feel your loss will depend on your relationship with the person who is gone. Grief and a sense of loss will always be there. After the death, you feel numb, as if a bombshell has been dropped on you. You find that you're unable to make decisions. You're confused and forgetful during normal conversations. You may outwardly appear calm, but you're anxious inside. You may experience symptoms that make you ill, such as nausea, vomiting and headaches.

After several weeks, you try to return to some normality in your life. You move around as if you're anaesthetized trying to work and clean out the belongings of your loved one. You look normal but don't feel it.

Then the bottom falls out and you feel the depth of your pain. You feel alone and afraid. You think your life will never be the same. You may also start to feel guilt, as if you have let someone down. Maybe if you had acted more quickly, things would be different. You fear there's no possibility of being happy again. You feel misunderstood.

All of these feelings, and more, will come over you, and they're normal. How long you feel them and how long it takes you to find answers is up to you. Accepting the loss and plodding through the grief process takes time and work. When you emerge at the other end, you'll feel the loss but with more peace and the knowledge that you can carry on.

Different Kinds of Loss

Research has found that sudden, tragic deaths and the death of a young person are often hardest to accept. Our society sees children as our future. Children are a reflection of you as a parent. They're your dream for future generations. Parents often feel they can't go on, and would rather escape the pain. They wish they could give up their life so their child could live. Research shows that siblings can also be deeply affected and their needs must be met.

The death of one's spouse is devastating because one is losing one's best friend, roommate, lover and possibly the parent of one's children. There

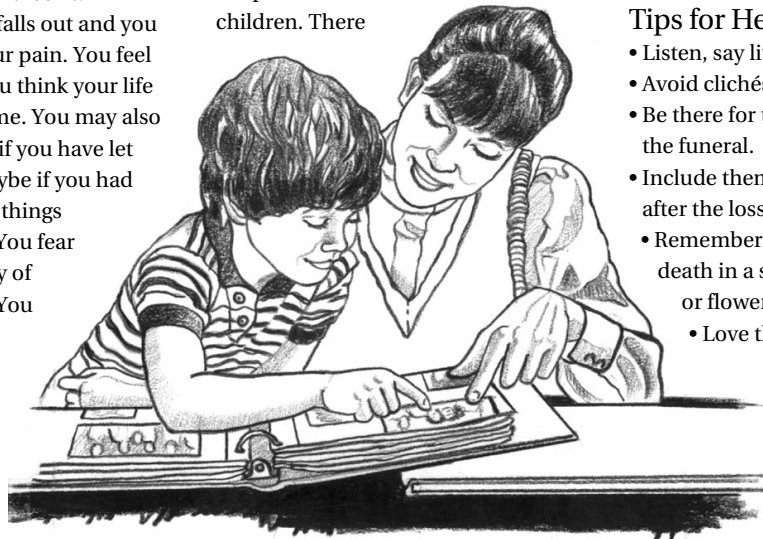
will be loneliness over morning coffee, jobs to be done in the house that one knows nothing about and no one to kiss goodnight. Older adults experience so much loss that sadness and depression can become an overriding factor in their lives. They're faced with their mortality almost daily.

When to Seek Help

Talking to friends and relatives about your loss is healing. You need to go on remembering the person with someone else who also loved them. Reading books about grief, facing the pain by being quiet and thinking, talking to your clergy or joining a support group can help. Seek professional assistance if depression, feelings that you don't value your own life and a sense of total despair prevail. If you have not grieved, years later your life can be out of control and you'll need to go back and face that death. Substituting alcohol or other drugs, overeating and other negative habits can result if you're unable to accept the death. Professional help can move you along the road to acceptance.

Tips for Helping the Survivor

- Listen, say little.
- Avoid clichés.
- Be there for the long haul, not just the funeral.
- Include them in the first holidays after the loss.
- Remember the anniversary of the death in a special way (a call, card or flower).
- Love them, accept them.



Talking and thinking about the person you lost helps heal your pain.