

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF WHEN A CHILD DIES

Grief, with its many ups and downs, last far longer than our society in general recognizes. Be patient with yourself.

Each person's grief is individual. You and your loved ones will experience it and cope with it differently.

Physical reactions to the death of a child may include loss of appetite or overeating, sleeplessness and sexual difficulties. A balanced diet, rest, and moderate exercise are especially important for the whole family at this time.

You may need to take the initiative in helping others know how to be supportive to you. Friends and family want to ease your pain but they don't know how.

Whenever possible, put off major decisions (changing residence, job change, etc.) for at least a year.

Avoid making hasty decisions about your child's belongings. Do not allow others to take over and rush you. You can do it little by little whenever you feel ready.

Parents may feel they have nothing to live for and may think about a release from this intense pain. Be assured that many parents feel this way but that sense of purpose and meaning does return. The pain does lessen.

Children are often the forgotten grievers within a family. They are experiencing many of the same emotions you are, so share thoughts and tears with them. Though it is a painful time, be sure they feel loved and included.

Holidays and the anniversaries of your child's birth and death can be stressful times. Consider the feelings of the entire family in planning how to spend the day. All yourself time and space for your own emotional needs.

A child's death or the death of a loved one often causes a parent to challenge and examine his/her faith or philosophy of life. Don't be disturbed if you are questioning old beliefs. For many, faith offers help to accept the unacceptable. Talk with those you trust about your re-examination.

It helps to become involved with a group of parents having similar experiences, sharing eases loneliness and promotes the expression of your grief in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding.

BEREAVED PARENTS AND FAMILIES CAN FIND HEALING AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE AS THEY REORGANIZE THEIR LIVES IN A POSITIVE WAY.

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