

FACTS OF GRIEF

Definitions

Loss: damage, trouble, or pain caused by losing someone or something important

Grief: deep and painful emotions experienced because of a loss

Mourning: the expression of those emotions of grief

Sources of Loss

- Abandonment
- Alcohol/drug use by a loved one
- Death of a loved one
- Death of a pet
- Divorce
- Ending a relationship
- Fire or theft
- Homelessness
- Incarceration of a loved one
- Loss of health or mobility
- Loss of a special possession
- Military deployment
- Moving to a new location/school
- Violence – as a victim or a witness

Remember

- Grief is different for everyone.
- Grief is a high stressor.
- Grief takes a long time.
- Grief is an emotional roller coaster. A grieving person may have extreme emotional highs and lows.
- Grief returns on holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, and other special events.

Sudden vs. Expected Death

Sudden Death:

- Shock and disbelief last longer.

- Sudden death can be more confusing, bringing up many feelings to deal with all at once.
- There is no time to say goodbye.

Expected Death:

- Grieving each little death along the way - such as an ill mother not being able to help buy the all-important prom dress like other moms, or an ill father who cannot shoot a basketball with his son while other fathers continue to play with their sons.
- Anticipatory grief happens when students start to grieve even before a loved one has died.
- There is time to prepare for the death and plan for life without the deceased.

Longevity & Intensity

The intensity and longevity of one's grief depend primarily on the source of the loss. Because grief is different for everyone, the following factors also influence the level of intensity and longevity:

- A sudden death is different from an expected death.
- Relationships to the deceased are individual and unique.
- Support systems and resources vary.
- People cope differently.
- Religious and cultural differences are important variables to consider.
- Responses may vary by gender.

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