

# Experiences of Grief

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## **Elements of Grief**

**Grief** is a normal and natural reaction to the death of a loved one. Most of us are not prepared for the long journey of grief which is sometimes devastating, frightening, and often lonely. We may think, do, and say things that are very unlike us. There seems to be no end to the intense feelings that we experience.

**Grief** has been likened to a raw open wound. With great care it eventually will heal but there will always be a scar. Life will never be the same but eventually your grief will soften.

The elements of grief have been compared to enduring a fierce storm at sea. The waves are peaked and close together. Eventually the sea becomes calmer but occasionally the storm regroups, strengthening without any warning. For several hours, days or weeks you may not feel grief; then suddenly you meet someone or see something, or hear something, and grief resumes. It seems as if you are taking one step forward and two back.

**Grief** has its common and its unique sides. Although it is a universal experience, no two people grieve the same, even in the same family. Like a snowflake or a fingerprint, each person's grief has characteristics all its own.

## **Concepts about Grief**

### ***GRIEF WORK***

The expression "grief work" is very true. It may be the hardest work that you will ever perform. It is draining.

### ***CONTROL***

We CANNOT control the feelings that arise within us. These feelings come from deep inside, but we can choose what to do with them. We can accept or reject them. To deny only prolongs our grief. Remember, what we do determines whether we remain in our grief or survive. Feelings are not bad or wrong. They should be recognized and faced honestly.

### ***MAJOR DECISIONS***

It is strongly suggested not to make major decisions (such as moving, money matters, etc.) unless absolutely necessary during the early stages of grief when judgement is cloudy. The conventional wisdom, "Never act in haste," was never more applicable.

### ***LISTENERS***

Find someone who will listen. Talking is therapy.

### ***GRIEF HAS NO TIMETABLE***

Grief often takes much longer than the bereaved or the people in their lives expect. It helps to take one day, one

