



Schuler-Lefebvre

FUNERAL CHAPEL

Dedicated To Those We Serve

Caring Connections:

*Grief: What it is &
what you can do*

Grief - the emotions or feelings we experience when someone we love dies.

Grief is the price we pay for loving. If you are reading this, it's likely you loved, and still love, someone special who has died. You are grieving, and knowing some things about grief lets you know you are not alone. Everyone in the world grieves. Everyone in the world also does it differently. And most people grieve in four ways.

1. Physically - Our bodies grieve.

As my father lay dying, my Aunt Ada hurried out to the restroom. When she came back she said, "I lost my cookies," a polite way of telling us she threw up. When you grieve, your heart may actually ache. Your head may hurt. You feel exhausted. You may not see clearly. Your stomach may feel upset or ache. Colds may attack you. You may have difficulty sleeping. You can't concentrate. Symptoms of the illness that caused your person's death may visit you. You may feel hungry and eat all the time or not be able to eat at all. All these and more are common to grievers. If you are worried at all about your health, by all means see your doctor. Be especially careful, however, about taking sleep aids or tranquilizers. Some of these can actually prolong your grief.

What you can do:

Make a commitment to yourself and your loved one who died to take really good care of yourself for the next year. Kelly Osmont knew her son, an only child who died after being kicked by a horse, would expect her to do just that. For one year after his death, she concentrated on eating right, drinking a lot of water (we lose water when we cry), exercising and getting sleep, even if it meant taking frequent naps. Sometimes I'd wake up and the last thing I wanted to do was take a walk. I would see all the reasons why not to like words on the inside of my eyelids. Then I would imagine windshield wipers wiping all the words away and I'd get up and go.

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2. Emotionally - We have all sorts of feelings that hit us like waves.

Here are just some of the feelings you may experience:

Sorrow, Anger, Loss, Emptiness, Fear, Anxiety, Hurt, Overwhelmed, Guilty.

Relief. Dependency. Loss of identity. Irritability. Self-pity. Depression.

What you can do:

Accept that these feelings are normal. They aren't good or bad, they just ARE. They are likely to hit you unannounced when you least expect them. Know they will not last forever and that you can handle them. I found someone to talk to. Just having coffee with a friend helped. When I got scared, I called someone or left the house for a while. I invited myself to cry whenever I needed to. I took a kitchen towel and hit the bed when I was mad. I talked to my loved one, too.

3. Mentally - Sometimes it's all we can think about. Grief plays with our heads.

It's easy to get caught up in questions - the "whys" and "what ifs." You go over and over things in your head. Decisions are difficult. You forget things. You act differently and can't figure out why. You read the same sentence over and over. It's just plain hard.

What you can do:

Get to know Grief, and know it well. There are small, simple books to help you on your journey. Keep a journal to record your feelings and your questions and make sure there's a calendar to mark up and check a few times every day so you don't miss appointments. Make a mental note that nothing is too small to write down. As part of your journal, let your eyes and mind watch for one thing each day that brings you joy. And write it down. Some of the little joys I wrote about seemed so tiny: a tulip blooming, a bird on my porch, an old photograph I found that made me cry and that went into my journal, too.

4. Spiritually - When someone we love dies, our whole being aches.

Some people feel they could never get through grief without their faith. Others say death destroyed their beliefs. I felt as if a hole had been torn in my soul. Religion is the practice of faith. Spirituality is responding to something greater than ourselves. Spirituality is that which brings you peace. The spirit searches and yearns and the heart answers. This can be a time of great spiritual growth for you. It can bring wisdom and concern for others as well as for yourself.

What you can do: Learn all you can about grief and how you can use it to be the person you want to be. Read. Talk to other people who are grieving as well. Be determined, even in your weakest moments, to grow from this experience, no matter what your age or circumstances. As the old saying goes, "You can go through this and grow through this." The person who gave you this information is a fine resource. Feel free to contact them whenever you have a question or a need. You are on a journey. Each day will take you in a different direction. Recognize grief as a normal, healthy part of life. Know that it will lessen over time. You will laugh and find joy again.