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## **NORMAL GRIEF RESPONSES**

Because grief can be so painful and feel so overwhelming, the experience is often frightening. Many people wonder if they are "going crazy," or worry about whether they are grieving the "right" way. Grief may impact every aspect of our being – physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual.

Everyone responds to grief in a unique way, and yet it may be helpful to realize that the following are **NORMAL AND NATURAL RESPONSES IN THE GRIEF PROCESS:**

### **PHYSICAL SENSATIONS:**

tightness in the throat  
heaviness in the chest  
empty feeling in the stomach  
lack of appetite  
difficulty sleeping  
dry mouth  
shortness of breath , sighing  
lack of energy, fatigue  
excess of nervous energy, restlessness  
feeling of weakness  
a pounding of the heart  
oversensitivity to noise

### **FEELINGS:**

a sense of numbness  
sadness and crying  
anger, irritability  
guilt, self-reproach  
loneliness  
fear, anxiety  
helplessness  
vulnerability  
depression  
relief  
mood swings  
intensity of all feelings

### **THOUGHT PATTERNS:**

difficulty believing the loss is real  
inability to concentrate  
preoccupation with the deceased  
difficulty with decision-making  
loss of time perception  
confusion

### **BEHAVIORS:**

wandering aimlessly, looking  
for the person  
withdrawing from others  
increased dependence  
assuming mannerisms or traits of  
the person who has died

### **SPIRITUAL RESPONSES:**

crisis of faith                      anger at God  
loss of meaning in life          despair  
turning to prayer and spiritual sources of comfort

In addition, you will probably need to tell and retell the details of the loss and remember things about what you have lost. You may find yourself trying to take care of other people who seem uncomfortable with your pain, by politely not talking about your feelings. If you are grieving for someone who died, you may feel the person's presence and have vivid dreams.

Again, these are all normal manifestations of grief. You may be experiencing other responses that are not listed, and wondering if they too are normal; when in doubt, check with your doctor or a grief counselor/therapist.