

The following information was prepared by the National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children:

For Teens: Death and Grief

If someone close to you has died, you will probably feel a lot of different emotions such as SADNESS, WORRY, SHOCK, DISBELIEF, CONFUSION, ANGER or GUILT. Your body may feel numb. Parts of your body may hurt, like your stomach. It may be hard for you to think or know what to say. These feelings may feel worse than they have ever felt before. But, they are all normal ways to feel and think after someone dies. You may have trouble sleeping, eating, or feeling happy about the things you usually enjoy. You may wonder if you will ever feel better.

All of these feelings and emotions are part of the grieving process. Grief is the emotion people feel when they experience a loss. Grief is also the name of the healing process that a person goes through after someone has died.

As you know, most people live for a long time but as they get older their bodies begin to stop working. Sometimes younger people die when they have an illness or experience an accident. The hardest kind of death for families and friends to deal with is when people die suddenly. When someone dies fast, there isn't a lot of time for their friends and family to get used to the idea that they are gone. But, for the person who dies quickly, there is little or no pain for them at all.

When you lose a family member you may feel mad that you don't have more time to spend with your parent, brother or sister. You may also have a hard time letting your other family members know how you feel. Some people may not feel comfortable talking about the person who died because they worry that they will make a parent or other family member upset. Sometimes when the death is caused by violence or the death is a suicide you will have many different kinds of thoughts and feelings that you will need help with.

Coping with Grief

The process of grieving is different for every individual. Some people want to reach out to others for support and comfort while others become very busy to take their minds off of the loss. Some people find it easy to talk to their friends or family about how they feel but others find it too painful to talk about their feelings. A few people may act out their grief by doing things like drinking or drugs to escape from their pain. However, these are dangerous activities that only make the pain temporarily disappear and make the grieving process longer.

If your pain seems to get worse, or if you feel like hurting yourself or having suicidal thoughts, TELL SOMEONE YOU TRUST about how you feel.

What to Expect

The first few days after someone dies can be intense. People often express strong emotions. Family and friends often participate in rituals that may be part of their religious, cultural, community or family traditions. These activities help people get through the first few days after a person has died. Sometimes a person can be so overwhelmed by the death that they aren't able to show emotion right away – even though the loss is very hard. When people go back to their normal activities it may be hard to concentrate because the grieving process continues. It's normal to have feelings and questions for a while after someone you love dies. Sometimes it is hard to know what to do. Sometimes it feels like you are betraying your friend or loved one when you finally begin to have fun again. If that person was your friend, and did love you, he or she would want you to have fun once again.

Caring for Yourself

- Know that you can and WILL heal from your grief.
- Participate in memorial services, funerals and other traditions.
- Be with others.
- Talk about it when you can.
- If you can't talk, express yourself in other ways such as writing in a journal.
- Exercise.
- Eat the food that tastes the best for you at the time.
- Cry if you need to.
- Know that in time you will never forget that person and that in time their no longer being there will not hurt as much as it did when he or she died.

Getting Help for Intense Grief

Here are some signs that your grief has been going on for too long:

- You feel depressed. It's hard to enjoy yourself, others or fun activities.
- Your grief is so intense that you feel you can't go on with your normal activities.
- Your grief is affecting your ability to concentrate, sleep, eat, or socialize as you normally do.
- You feel you can't go on living after the loss or you think about suicide, dying or hurting yourself.
- You have been having any of these feelings for four months or more.

Will I Ever Get Over This?

Every person takes his or her own time to heal after a loss. The way someone grieves a particular loss and the time it takes is very individual. Going forward and healing from grief doesn't mean forgetting about the person you lost.