

SOME COMMON SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

As you read through this list keep in mind that:

- you may experience all of these symptoms or only a few
- they can occur in any particular order
- how long each symptom lasts can vary
- if these symptoms are too intense, extreme or last for lengthy periods, seek professional help — examples are bolded in the information below
- there is no time limit to how long your grief will last — most bereaved parents say that it doesn't ever fully go away, but you learn to deal with it the best you can
- share this list with other grieving family members, especially grandparents.

SHOCK AND DENIAL

'I just don't believe it!'

The impact and shock of the tragedy may take days, weeks or even months to be realised. Feelings of disbelief can continue into the future.

EMOTIONAL RELEASE

'I can't stop crying.'

Crying is a normal reaction to a death. It is a healthy way to release tensions and feelings rather than locking them inside.

LONELINESS

'Without him/her I might as well be dead.'

A feeling of emptiness may occur as family and friends return to their own lives. Feelings of loneliness, isolation and depression may become more intense. For some, these feelings leave suddenly; for others, it may take a long time.

PAIN

'I just can't bear it!'

Anxiety and loneliness can create emotional pain. This strain of grief can even cause physical distress. If the physical signs continue for a lengthy period, you should talk to your GP or other health care advisor.

PANIC

'Oh, what am I going to do?'

It may become difficult to concentrate on anything or you may fear losing control. Not knowing what to do and not understanding what is happening can result in panic.

GUILT

'I should have done more for him/her.'

Parents sometimes feel they could have done more for their child. This guilt is common. Sometimes, a person will experience unrealistic guilt stemming from a situation which was uncontrollable. This type of guilt is irrational and is best discussed with a bereavement counsellor or GP.

ANGER

'Oh, God, why me?'

After dealing with personal guilt, it becomes natural to look for someone else to blame. There may be hostility toward the doctors, nurses or anyone who seemingly could have prevented his/her death. These feelings of anger are better expressed than kept inside. It is best to talk to a tolerant and sympathetic listener, counsellor or GP.

DEPRESSION

'Will life ever be worth living again?'

A feeling of weariness develops from depression and frustration. Sometimes, suffering in silence seems easier than socialising. Forcing yourself to get involved in activities will help relieve the depressed feelings. When the despair mounts, contact your GP, a bereavement counsellor or someone who will listen.

HEALING

'I now realise the meaning of friends.'

Through the affection and encouragement of friends and family, gradually a new meaning for life unfolds. As you begin to enter into activities, your mood will brighten, and life will begin to take on a new perspective.

READJUSTMENT

'My life is different, but different can still be good.'

The acuteness of your child's death will diminish as readjustment begins. This will take time, but there will come a day when you can plan for your future and remember your child without the hurt and pain.

Source: Adapted from the American Medical Association.