



We have chosen the image of the labyrinth as a metaphor for the journey through grief. A labyrinth is not a maze as there are no dead ends and no wrong turnings. There is only one way - forward. So it is with grief. The only way through is forward, with many turns and going back and forth over what seems like the same territory. We journey to the centre of our grief, to the centre of ourselves, and then slowly return to re-enter the world.

Each person's experience on the journey of grief will be different. This is a reflection of our personal style, our relationship with the person who died, our internal and social resources, and our past history of coping. As you journey through your own grief process, there will likely be unexpected turns and insights.

Hospice Northwest offers individual, one-to-one grief support to persons who are bereaved because of death, regardless of how or when the death occurred. Trained volunteers are assigned to grieving people, for support, companionship and non-judgmental listening. Confidentiality is assured.

Referrals can be made by anyone, providing the bereaved person is in agreement. Visits take place in the client's home, unless otherwise arranged.

Hospice Northwest offers a Grief Support Group for persons who have experienced the death of a loved one. The six week program is offered three times a year. Each group meets once a week at the Hospice Northwest office at 63 Carrie Street.

There is no charge to the individual for any of the programs or services offered by Hospice Northwest.

If you or someone you know has concerns or questions about grief, please contact us.

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We encourage your donation. Your gift will provide direct care for individuals and families today, as well as help us to meet the need for end-of-life and bereavement care tomorrow. To discuss making a gift or including Hospice Northwest in your legacy plans, or to find out more about fundraising activities, please contact us:

Hospice Northwest

807-626-5570

Email: kathleen@hospicenorthwest.ca

Please visit our website at
www.hospicenorthwest.ca

for more information on our Grief and Bereavement Services.

Content Courtesy of the Victoria Hospice Society

Dealing With Grief

A Guide to Understanding Your Reactions



Bereavement Services



When someone important to you dies, you grieve. This means that you may experience a wide range of responses, often over an extended period of time. The following three sections generally coincide with early, middle and later grief, though variation and overlap of these phases is common.

When a death occurs

As you accept the fact of the death of someone important, you will feel shock, numbness and disbelief that this has happened. Panic and strong physical and emotional reactions are common.

Adjusting to loss

Later, as the numbness subsides, you will deal with what this loss means to you and the emotional pain of grieving. The intensity of feeling may surprise or frighten you, but it is natural and can be resolved as you move through it.

As life goes on

As you adjust to life without the person who died, you will begin to re-establish connections with the world around you. You have more energy for family and friends, work and other interests.

Grief may be somewhat familiar, or it may be a new, uncertain endeavour. It is not an easy journey and there may be times when you want more support than is available through your social network. Please do not hesitate to call Hospice Northwest to discuss our Bereavement Services.



The Grief Journey

When a death occurs

Walking the Edges

SOCIAL

- Withdrawal from others
- Unrealistic expectations of self and others
- Poor judgement about relationships

PHYSICAL

- Shortness of breath and palpitations
- Digestive upsets
- Low energy, weakness and restlessness

EMOTIONAL

- Crying, sobbing and wailing
- Indifference and emptiness
- Outrage and helplessness

MENTAL

- Confusion, forgetfulness and poor concentration
- Denial and daydreaming
- Constant thoughts about the person who died and/or the death

SPIRITUAL

- Blaming God or life
- Lack of meaning, direction or hope
- Wanting to die or join the person who died

WHAT HELPS

- To pace yourself moment to moment
- To make no unnecessary changes
- To talk about the person and the death
- To use practical and emotional supports



Adjusting to loss

Entering the Depths

SOCIAL

- Rushing into new relationships
- Wanting company but unable to ask
- Continued withdrawal and isolation
- Self-consciousness

PHYSICAL

- Changes in appetite and sleep patterns
- Shortness of breath and palpitations
- Digestive upsets

EMOTIONAL

- Intense and conflicting emotions
- Magnified fear for self or others
- Anger, sadness, guilt, depression

MENTAL

- Sense of going crazy
- Memory problems
- Difficult to concentrate/understand
- Vivid dreams or nightmares

SPIRITUAL

- Trying to contact the person who died
- Sensing the presence of the person who died; visitations
- Continued lack of meaning

WHAT HELPS

- To recognize and express emotions
- To acknowledge changes
- To understand grief and know others experience similar responses



As life goes on

Mending the Heart

SOCIAL

- More interest in daily affairs of self/others
- Ability to reach out and meet others
- Energy for social visits and events

PHYSICAL

- Physical symptoms subside
- Sleep pattern and appetites are more settled
- Gut-wrenching emptiness lightens

EMOTIONAL

- Emotions are less intense
- Feeling of coming out of the fog
- More peace; less guilt

MENTAL

- Increased perspective about the death
- Ability to remember with less pain
- Improved concentration and memory
- Dreams and nightmares decrease

SPIRITUAL

- Reconnection with religious/spiritual beliefs
- Life has new meaning and purpose
- Acceptance of death as part of life cycle

WHAT HELPS

- To reflect on progress since the death
- To begin envisioning a future
- To engage in new activities

