

Emotional Reactions

Naming and Claiming Our Emotions is Important

1. Anger:

- Some will experience this and some will not
- Angers towards caregivers, professionals, your loved one, God and just plain angry are all normal.
- Find constructive outlet such as tearing paper, punching a pillow, exercise
- When your anger comes out of nowhere, apologize and be honest with them

2. Sadness:

- Most people say this is like nothing they have felt before
- Words like bone crushing, suffocating, a hole in my heart
- Allow yourself to be sad!
- Journal, write poems, listening to music that helps you cry and process your sadness

3. Loneliness:

- This may surprise us!
- You may feel lonely in the middle of 100 people
- Probably even when you are doing something you enjoy
- You are likely feeling the absence of the person you have lost and want them back

4. Feeling Isolated:

- Feeling that no one understands what you are feeling
- Feeling your reaction is so intense it isn't normal or it scares you
- Educate yourself about grief, talk with someone who has experienced grief, attend support groups

5. Shock:

- Feeling that this just did not happen
- Not able to grasp what has happened
- Able to recall events of your loved ones death but not comprehending and putting it all together

6. Numbness:

- Feeling nothing
- Feeling "frozen"
- Unable to express any emotion
- This is normal! And can last a long time

7. Fear:

- Fear of the unknown
- Fear of having to try new things
- Fear of having to live without your loved one
- Fear that this grief will always feel this bad

8. Anxiety:

- Having to make new decisions or decisions on our own
- Not having that person to bounce ideas off of
- Having to revamp your life and schedule (ex. if you have been a caregiver and no longer doing this every day)

9. Relief:

- Having a sense of relief after your loved one dies
- Relief for the person that they are not suffering
- Relief that caregiving duties are finished
- Sometimes there is relief and sometimes there is a void and thinking I don't know what to do with myself.

10. Guilt:

- Thinking I wish I would have or would not have

- For not forcing the person to get treatment
- Or for forcing the person to get treatment
- May have survivor guilt
- We take on guilt for things we had no control over
- At some point, you will feel happiness or joy again and may feel guilty for feeling this.
- Feeling your guilt is important and so is processing it, share with a friend or professional

11. Emptiness:

- Feeling empty with the day to day
- Feeling empty spiritually
- Feeling like there is literally a hole in your heart

12. Compassion:

- Some of us have a great sense of compassion for others
- Greater understanding of other's grief journey

13. Jealousy:

- Being jealous of others who have what you do not
- Being around other couples if you have lost a spouse
- Having difficulty listening to a friend complain about her parent when you just lost yours

14. Physical Symptoms:

- Hollowness in stomach
- Tightness in chest or throat
- Oversensitivity to noise
- Shortness of breath
- Lethargy
- Muscle tension
- Fatigue
- Decreased immune system

- Decreased motor skills
- Decreased cognitive functioning

WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT OUR EMOTIONS????

1. Realize there is nothing wrong
2. Do not try to escape or avoid intense grief emotions
3. Listening and learn from your emotions
4. Journal
5. Talk, talk and more talk- tell your story
6. Take the time you need
7. Reach out for support (friend or professionals)