

# Recognizing Grief and Methods for Coping

By Tyler Woods Ph.D.

Grief comes in a variety of sizes, shapes and colors. No one person grieves the same way as others. Grieving is so difficult because it involves a variety of feelings. Some of these feelings can be intense, persisting and at times extremely very disorganizing. It is important to know some of the common symptoms of grief so you can recognize your grief. Some common signs of grief include:

- ☯ Physical symptoms that resemble flu such as aches and pains, heaviness in the chest, nausea, diarrhea, headaches, and stiffness in joints.
- ☯ Loss or increase of appetite
- ☯ Feelings of guilt shame and anger
- ☯ Feeling restless and unable to concentrate or focus
- ☯ Forgetting important things, being unable to finish what is started
- ☯ Insomnia
- ☯ Mood swings, depression, anxiety and manic behaviors
- ☯ Feeling as though the loss is not real
- ☯ Isolating or refusing to be alone

It is important to recognize the symptoms of grief and learn healthy ways of dealing with grief. Since grief takes on so many facets, there is a variety of coping techniques that you can implement. Listed below are a few techniques that have helped people cope with their grief.

- ☯ Don't let others rush you with your grief. There is no set time for the grieving process. Take all the time you feel you need to work through your feelings. This includes putting off major decisions. Try to allow yourself to understand your grief. Know you will have good days and bad days.
- ☯ Crying is the healthiest expression of grief. Don't try to suppress tears for the sake of others otherwise CRY IF YOU NEED TO!.
- ☯ Talk regularly with friends or family. Talking with others about what you think and feel is one of the best things you can do for yourself It helps relieve some of the pressure you may feel, it can give you a sense of perspective, and it keeps you in touch with others.
- ☯ Create a memory book of some sort. Make a scrap album of photos, poems, special achievements, newspaper clippings and awards or anything else that means a great deal to you or your lost loved one.
- ☯ Plant a living memorial. Plant a flower garden or a vegetable garden in memory of your loved one. There you will be able to watch it grow and flourish with time.
- ☯ Write to the person who passed. Write everything you feel and what emotions their passing has created. Don't be afraid to write about anger,

- sorrow, guilt and shame. Also don't be afraid to express love, happiness and joy that is currently going on in your life.
- ☯ Keep a journal. Write about what you have learned in life, what future lessons you plan to learn and keep track of what you are doing with your life. You will be surprised at how well you are actually doing.
  - ☯ Consider a support group. Spending time with a group of people who have faced a life experience similar to yours can be very therapeutic. You might discover how natural your feelings are and learn from the experiences and the ideas of others.
  - ☯ Structure alone time. Make sure you have time all by yourself so you can think and be in touch with yourself. It is also very important to make sure you do not have too much alone time. Structure activities with family and friends. If that is difficult, then think about volunteer work. Also screen your entertainment. Some TV shows, movies, books and music are best not viewed or listened to when you're deep in grief.

There are a variety of ways to cope with your grief. If your grief becomes too unmanageable, Tucson has many grief therapists and you should consider therapy to assist you with your grieving process.