

Expectations You Can Have For Yourself in Grief

You can expect that:

Your grief will take longer than most people think.

Your grief will take more energy than you would ever have imagined.

Your grief will involve many changes and will be continually developing.

Your grief will show itself in all spheres of your life: psychological, social, and physical.

Your grief will depend upon how you perceive the loss.

You will grieve for many things both symbolic and tangible, not just the death alone.

Your grief will entail mourning not only for the actual person you lost, but also for all of the hopes, dreams, and unfulfilled expectations you held for and with that person, and for the needs that will go unmet because of the death.

Your grief will involve a wide variety of feelings and reactions, not solely those that are generally thought of as grief, such as depression and sadness.

The loss will resurrect old issues, feelings, and unresolved conflicts from the past.

You will have some identity confusion as a result of this major loss and the fact that you are experiencing reactions that may be quite different for you.

You may have combination of anger and depression, such as irritability, frustration, annoyance or intolerance.

You will feel some anger and guilt, or at least some manifestation of these emotions.

You may have a lack of self concern.

You may experience grief spasms, acute upsurges of grief that occur suddenly with no warning.

You will have trouble thinking (memory, organization and intellectual processing) and making decisions.

You will feel like you are going crazy.

You may be obsessed with death and preoccupied with the deceased.

You may begin a search for meaning and may question your religion and or your philosophy of life.

You may find yourself acting socially in ways that are different than before.

You may find yourself having a number of physical reactions.

Society will have unrealistic expectations about your mourning and may respond inappropriately to you.

You may find that there are certain dates, events, and stimuli that bring upsurges in grief.

Certain experiences later in life may resurrect intense grief for you temporarily.

In summary, your grief will bring with it, depending upon the combination of factors above, an intense amount of emotion that will surprise you and those around you. Most of us are unprepared for the global response we have to a major loss. Our expectations tend to be unrealistic, and more often than not, we receive insufficient assistance from friends and society. Your grief will be more intense than you ever anticipated. You can expect to see brief upsurges of it at anniversary and holiday times, and a response to certain stimuli that remind you of what you have lost. Your grief will be very idiosyncratic and dependent upon the meaning of your loss, your own personal characteristics, the type of death, your social support and your physical state.

Excerpt from: *Grieving: How to Go On Living When Someone You Love Dies*. Therese A. Rando, PH. D Lexington Books, Lexington, MA, 1988. and lifted from 4th Quarter, 2000 news letter - H.A.N.D., from their web site. H.A.N.D. = Houston's Aid in Neonatal Death. <http://www.hern.org/~hand/>