



## Coping with the Loss of a Loved One

Following the death of a spouse, family member, friend or co-worker, you may experience a wide range of feelings, and your moods may change very quickly. These irregular emotions are normal and healthy under the circumstances.

### MOURNING AND GRIEVING ARE DIFFERENT

**Mourning** is a process you go through to accept the loss. It involves religious traditions that honor the dead or the gathering of family and friends to share the loss. Mourning can last for months or years – it has no standard duration.

**Grieving** is the physical and psychological expression of your loss, including crying, losing your appetite, being unable to sleep and feeling depressed. After the loss of a loved one, it is important that you allow yourself to express all of your emotions. Keeping them hidden may result in physical or emotional illness later. Allowing yourself to grieve helps maintain your mental health.

### COPING TIPS

- **Don't isolate yourself from people who care.** Spend time with family and friends or attend support groups.
  - **Let your feelings show.** Don't stifle your feelings or wear a mask when you are hurting inside. Share your feelings with those around you who care.
  - **Monitor your health.** The stress of losing a loved one often affects your natural defense system, aggravating existing illnesses or even bringing on new health conditions. Get plenty of rest, eat well and see your doctor if you think you are ill.
- **Don't make major life changes.** Experts suggest that you don't sell your house, move, remarry, change jobs, have another child or make major life changes for about one year following the loss. This will allow you to adjust to your loss before you embark on a major life change.
  - **Make an effort to stay in the present.** While it is important to remember the past, the present is where we all live.
  - **Get professional help when necessary.** Be patient with your feelings. It may take months or years to fully adjust to the loss of a loved one. Talk with your doctor or clergyman or a grief counselor. Don't feel like you are being weak if you ask for help. In fact, just the opposite is true—doing what is best for you is a sign of strength. If your feelings seem overwhelming, don't be afraid to ask for help. Calling your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a good place to start.

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