

A Young Person's Grief

Grief is the feeling experienced with a loss or an anticipated loss. When someone dies, or is expected to die, it is natural to experience emotional and physical pain. This pain may seem overwhelming at times. The following are some feelings that a grieving person may experience as well as some suggestions that may be helpful.

A Young Person Who Is Experiencing Grief May:

- Feel **restless** and have **difficulty concentrating** (at school, work) and sleeping.
- Feel that the loss is not real, that it did not actually happen (may have frequent dreams of that person being alive).
- Feel extreme **sadness, guilt, anger, and possible relief**.
- **Cry** often and at unexpected times.
- Feel the need to tell and retell the events concerning the loved one's illness and/or death.
- Feel **unusually tired** and not able to do their normal activities.
- Engage in **excessive eating, drinking, and/or drug usage** to mask their overwhelming feelings concerning their loss.
- Experience **guilt** when they begin to feel good again or because they feel that they should have or could have done or said something to prevent the loved one from dying.
- Feel **angry with God** and question their spiritual beliefs and values.
- Feel they can't or **shouldn't talk about their feelings** of loss because it may upset people around them.
- Feel **isolated** from others yet want to talk about their feelings concerning their loss.
- **Sense the loved one's presence** by hearing her/his voice or seeing her/his face.

Suggestions For Friends and Family of The Grieving Youth:

- **Visit and/or call.** Let your bereaved friend know that you are there for them—don't worry about the "right" thing to say: be yourself—genuineness counts, not perfection. Give your friend a hug, write a note and tell them that you care. Do what is comfortable for you.
- **Avoid clichés.** "It's better this way" or "She is no longer in pain." These phrases only minimize the loss your friend is experiencing. A simple, yet sincere "I'm sorry" may be better.
- **Be a good listener.** Your friend may need to talk about their loss and may need to repeat their stories several times. Try not to be judgmental or critical concerning their feelings about their loss. Accept silence as part of the healing process: your presence may be just what they need.
- **Be patient.** Everyone responds to grief differently. Let your friend guide you in what they need. Stay in touch with your friend—her/his needs may change during their grieving process. Often, the hardest time in the grief process can be after several months, when life is supposed to be "back to normal".