

## Understanding Your Grief

*Whenever we are confronted by loss, we experience one of the strongest emotions, that of grief. Grief is a natural response to loss; it is a healing process that takes time to work through.*

As a bereaved person, you may experience a wide range of feelings. These may include: sadness, disbelief, anger, guilt, depression or loneliness as well as possibly a sense of relief, hope and acceptance.

Initially your feelings may be those of shock, numbness and disbelief, even if you were well prepared. These feelings are a natural way for your body to protect itself.

You may have difficulty recalling the person who has died, or your recollections may be very vivid and troublesome to you. A photograph of this person, as you would like to remember them helps to recall happy memories.

Following the experience you have been through, it is possible you may feel exhausted and have no motivation, even to do the every day chores.

It is sometimes very tempting to feel that life would be more bearable if you moved house, or quickly disposed of possessions or refused to see people. There is a very natural urge to avoid painful things. However, such quick changes usually make things worse and decisions like these require careful thought.

As special dates and anniversaries approach there will often be a sense of intense pain, both in anticipation and on the day. Plan to be in a supportive environment at these times.

With time you may suddenly find you are relaxed and that momentarily you have forgotten about the death. Don't feel guilty, this is a natural way for your body to cope with the immense physical and emotional stress that your loss has caused. You need to take time out from your grief, it doesn't mean you think any less of the person who has died.

### The importance of talking

Whatever your feelings, it is important to remember that it is normal and healthy to express them and it is often helpful to talk them over with someone who understands and who has time to listen.

This person may be a friend or relative. However, because they want to ease your pain but do not know how to do so, they may feel uncomfortable around you. You may have to take the initiative and talk about the person who has died.

Many people find it easier to express their feelings or thoughts to someone who is not close to them. The **Griefline Telephone Counselling Service** is available free of charge from 12 noon to 3.00am, 7 days a week. ( **Ph: 9596 7799** )

### Remember

Grief, with its associated feelings is a very individual process. We all react differently and it can last for longer than society generally recognises. Be patient with yourself and allow yourself to grieve in whatever way is comfortable for you.