

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT GRIEF



No matter how old you are, at some point, you will have someone you love die or have a friend who has someone they care about die. Knowing what to expect and how to help makes a difference.

Grief hurts. If you love someone and they die, it hurts. Grief hurts because we love that person very much. Crying helps to relieve pain, tension and gets feelings out, but not everyone cries. Not crying does not equal not caring!

If you are old enough to love, then you are old enough to grieve. People of all ages grieve when they lose a person or pet that they love.

Grief can be confusing. You can feel really full of feelings when you are grieving, and those feelings can be all over the map- sad, mad, scared, happy, confused, relieved, overwhelmed, numb, and excited. No feeling is wrong, but some feelings are harder to deal with than others. People around you may not understand.

Grief is a natural reaction. Knowing how to help and get through it is a learned action. The feelings of grief are automatic, but figuring out what to do with those feelings is something that is not easy. Knowing how to help yourself or someone you care about who is grieving is something we have to learn how to do. It is good to be thoughtful and pay attention to how you choose to help. It is good to talk to people you trust about your feelings.

Grief looks different for different people. We are all different in what we like to do and how we like to act around others. When we grieve our individual personalities make one person want to talk and share and another person want to be private about their feelings. Respect what feels comfortable for yourself or your grieving friend, and don't expect them to be a certain way.

First, Do No Harm! Be mindful of your words. If you say something and feel it was hurtful, immediately apologize and take responsibility – ask the grieving person how you can show you care in a way that is comfortable for them. Consider saying nothing- just be present. Nothing you can say will make the hurting magically stop.

Things that help when you hurt:

- Talk to someone you trust.
- Talk to someone else who is grieving for the person you lost.
- Tell stories and memories about the person who died.
- Do something to get your mind on other things if you can – take a break from grieving.
- Spend some time alone.
- Spend some time with friends.
- Draw pictures, play music, write poetry, stories, or songs.

Things that help when someone you care about hurts:

- Acknowledge that you know the person has lost someone: tell them, send a card, share a memory, draw them a picture, or give them a hug (if they like that).
- Go to the visitation and/or funeral – you don't have to say or do anything profound. Simply going shows you care.
- Remember that their life has changed permanently as the days, weeks and months go by.
- Use the name of the person who died. Even if it brings tears, hearing the name is comforting.

For more information, please call Heartlinks at 618-277-1800.

