

Recovering

Remember that no matter how painful and difficult this is, you must always believe you can pull through. Try to look for positive things around you. You might try a new activity, new class or even volunteer to help someone else. Many agencies including hospitals and schools provide an excellent atmosphere of caring and would welcome some of your time. Watch for the "Volunteer Alert" in the newspaper.

Set goals for yourself and talk them over with a friend or counselor. Both short and long-range goals will give you a way to look ahead and can help in recovering. You will eventually feel better about moving ahead with your life.

Take things a day at a time. Give yourself a pat on the back as you progress. And, look for and value the good parts of your life. There really will be more hopeful times!

Internet resources

<http://www.growthhouse.org/death.html>
Growth House, Inc. website with resources on grief and bereavement.

<http://rivendell.org/>
"GriefNet", includes information on support resources in addition to an annotated library listing.

Other resources

Student Development/Counseling, Kirkwood Community College, 398-5471, 6301 Kirkwood Blvd. SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406

Abbe Center for Community Mental Health, 398-3562, 520 11th St. NW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52405

Pastoral Care and Bereavement Support Group, Mercy Medical Center, 398-6106, 701 10th St. SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402 www.mercycare.org/

Pastoral Care and Support Group, St. Lukes Hospital, 369-7347, 1026 A Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402 www.stlukescr.org/

Suicide Survivors, Foundation 2, Inc., 362-2174, 1540 2nd Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402

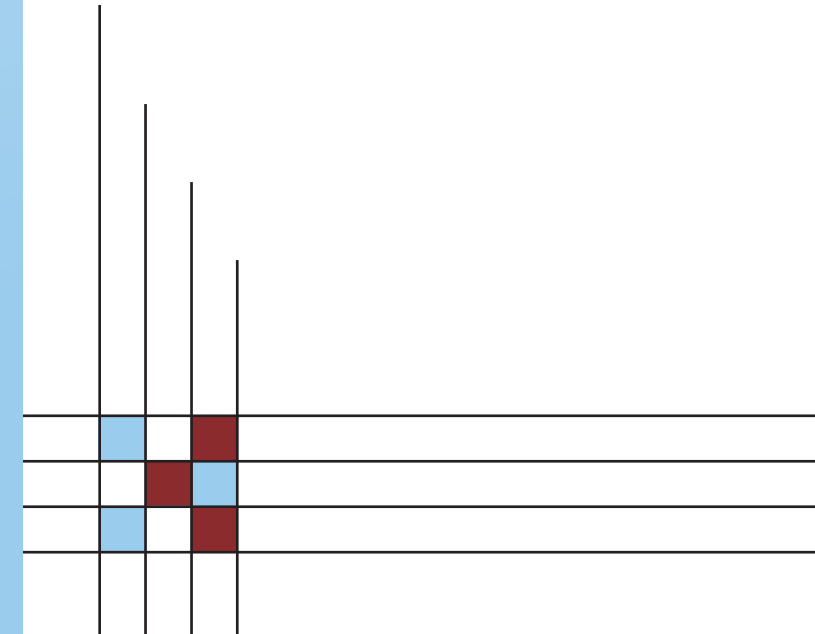
Family Service Agency, 398-3943, 819 5th St. SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401

A church; you don't even have to be a member.

This handout is part of a Self-Help Information Series written by Kirkwood Community College Counselors, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. 319-398-5471 or 1-800-332-2055, ext. 5471.

Please share this information with family, friends and classmates.

Dealing with Grief



Understanding the Process

What is Grief?

Grief is a natural and necessary reaction to a change or significant loss in our lives. It is a healthy, human response to situations such as:

- Death of a family member or friend
- Separation or divorce
- Miscarriage
- Injury or disability
- Personal assault
- Loss of a job, property or pet
- Moving to a new place
- Children or roommates leaving
- Giving up a dream

While any loss can be difficult and can cause grief, the greatest loss we experience is when a loved one dies. Even then, grieving fully is the best way to move toward accepting the loss. Grief is a painful experience, but it is important to believe that the pain will eventually subside.

Sometimes leaving a part of your life to go on to a new location, job or school can cause grieving, too. Even when the coming change is positive, the process of leaving can be painful. Any change means facing some unknowns. Grief may accompany the giving up of something that is familiar—the look and feel of a place, the people associated with it, the remembered events that we participated in. Feeling sad at such events is normal.

Understanding Grief

Whatever the loss you face, understanding grief may help you with the grieving process.

It is important to understand grief since you will face loss or change from time to time throughout life. Understanding can aid you in facing reality and in continuing to grow and recover.

Grieving people usually experience several stages. It takes time for an emotional wound to heal and your own experience will be unique. Dealing with grief is not a “one size fits all” proposition. The stages commonly experienced are something like these:

- **DENIAL** “This isn’t really happening to me!” Emotional numbness and a resistance to believing or accepting the event may be the first reaction. These feelings eventually pass.
- **ANGER** “This is unfair.” Resentful, angry feelings may be focused on yourself or others. Embrace your anger as a positive healing force. Anger doesn’t have to be suppressed or destructive. Instead, it can be both a healthy response and a transformative, powerful energy. It takes time, but you can work through this anger.
- **BLAME** “If only I’d done something sooner!” It is not unusual to blame yourself (or others) for something that you did or did not do to prevent the loss. Try to remember that you are human and some events just can’t be controlled.
- **DEPRESSION** “Why bother! Things will never be right again.” Feeling physically and mentally drained can sometimes keep you from doing routine tasks of living, working and playing. Eventually you will be ready to move (a little at a time) toward becoming involved in life again.
- **LONELINESS** “No one is around who can relate!” A sense of personal loss can make changes in your social life. Feeling alone or afraid will be a challenge

for you. Seeking out new friends or calling old ones works for some people. In time, these feelings become easier to handle.

- **HOPE** “I think there are good times ahead somewhere.” Working through the grieving process brings you to a place where you can see ahead to other things. Accepting the loss and being ready to “go on” allows you to look ahead with hope.

Coping

How Can You Help Yourself Live With Loss?

FIRST, think about your feelings. Express them by talking or writing them out. Some people use art, music or poetry to express their feelings. Use what works for you, but **DON’T** hold painful feelings inside.

SECOND, ask for help and accept it. If you want someone around, ask. If someone stops by to offer support, food or company, accept it. Even casual friends will understand if you do or do not want people around, but **DON’T BE AFRAID TO ASK**. Remember you may want help weeks or even months later – just ask for it.

THIRD, see a trained professional (clergy person, counselor, psychologist or doctor) if you feel unduly upset, depressed or ill. These people can provide support and encouragement to help you deal with the grieving process.

FOURTH, take care of yourself. Don’t forget to eat well and sleep enough. Grief adds stress to both your mind and body. Try to find relaxing things to do as well as projects or work to occupy yourself.