

Knowing When Professional Help is Needed

Because grieving is so painful, some people feel they are “going crazy” and need help to cope. Generally speaking, if the mourner cries when he or she feels like it, finds an outlet for expression of feelings (a good friend, family member, journal writing, etc.) and “goes with” the grieving process rather than trying to avoid it, resolution will eventually come.

Following are grieving characteristics that may be expected and generally would not indicate that medical or psychotherapeutic help is necessary. However, counseling from a grief therapist skilled at working with survivors of crime may be helpful for all victims.

- ☞ Unanticipated periods of crying which may reoccur for months or even years (grief spasms).
- ☞ Hallucinations or dreams about the deceased from time to time.
- ☞ Periods of loss appetite and difficulty sleeping which do not last so long that significant weight loss or exhaustion occurs.
- ☞ Periods of anger about the loss of the loved one which are difficult to focus.
- ☞ Difficulty deciding what to do with the “things” of the deceased.
- ☞ Remorseful feelings and death wishes accompanied by rational plans for coping rather than plans for committing suicide or homicide.
- ☞ Fears and avoidance of things associated with the loss; for example, some anxiety about driving, or avoiding the scene of the accident.
- ☞ Desire to keep a box of mementos of the deceased, but attach no “magical” significance to the mementos.

The following, however, may be indications that individual, group, or family psychotherapy should be utilized as well as consultation with a physician.

- ☞ Continuing use of heavy tranquilizers; new or increased use of alcohol or drugs in order to cope.
- ☞ Lack of grieving symptoms and numbing of all emotional responses.
- ☞ Eating or sleeping difficulties which result in obvious body changes such as weight loss or exhaustion.
- ☞ Preoccupation with death wishes which include a plan for carrying out suicide or homicide.

Our Mission

Hospice of Washington County, Inc.
compassionately serves our community by providing
palliative and end-of-life care to patients and loved ones,
as well as grief support for those coping with a life-changing loss.

301-791-6360

