

## Coping Facts for

# GRIEF AND LOSS

*Grief is a natural response to a life-changing loss. Grieving is a healthy and natural healing process. It is not a sign of weakness. For most people, grieving follows a predictable pattern of coping stages. The ultimate goal of the grief process is to gain acceptance of the changes that have occurred as a result of the loss.*

*The best way to cope with loss is to recognize it, understand that the feelings you experience are normal, and to reach out for support during the grieving process.*

### Tips for Coping With Grief

- Take your time. Don't judge or measure your reactions by those of others.
- Talk, share your feelings and the meaning this loss has for you.
- Pay attention to your body's needs. Exercise (according to your doctor's recommendations) and eat a balanced diet.
- Surround yourself with friends and family who love and support you. Avoid isolating.
- Tears may come unexpectedly and at times when you thought you were finished grieving. Be patient with yourself. The intensity of your grief should diminish with time.
- Allow yourself time to grieve and give yourself permission to take periodic breaks from the grieving process.
- If you follow a religious faith, this can be a time for prayer and quiet meditation. Seek out your faith or spiritual advisors.
- Avoid alcohol and other mind-altering substances.
- Learn to be sensitive and flexible with your new needs and lifestyle.
- Grieving can be physically and emotionally exhausting. Make time for extra rest and adequate sleep.
- Seek professional help if you feel that you are not making progress, your grief restricts you from performing your daily tasks, or if you experience painful flashbacks.

### Stages of the Grieving Process

Denial  
Disbelief  
Numbness  
Shock

Anger and Guilt  
Anger, sometimes misdirected  
Guilt, sometimes misdirected  
Blame, sometimes misdirected

Sadness and Despair  
Sadness  
Loneliness  
Tearfulness  
Depression  
Reminders that bring new waves of grief

Acceptance and Hope  
Acceptance of your loss  
Adjustment to change  
Expectation of positive future

Aftermath  
The intensity of grief decreases

For more information, contact the Missouri Department of Mental Health Office of Disaster Readiness  
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When there are large numbers of victims the overwhelming nature of the circumstances may require the use of support groups, hotlines and other resources to provide more structure to address the needs of responder teams, family, and friends.