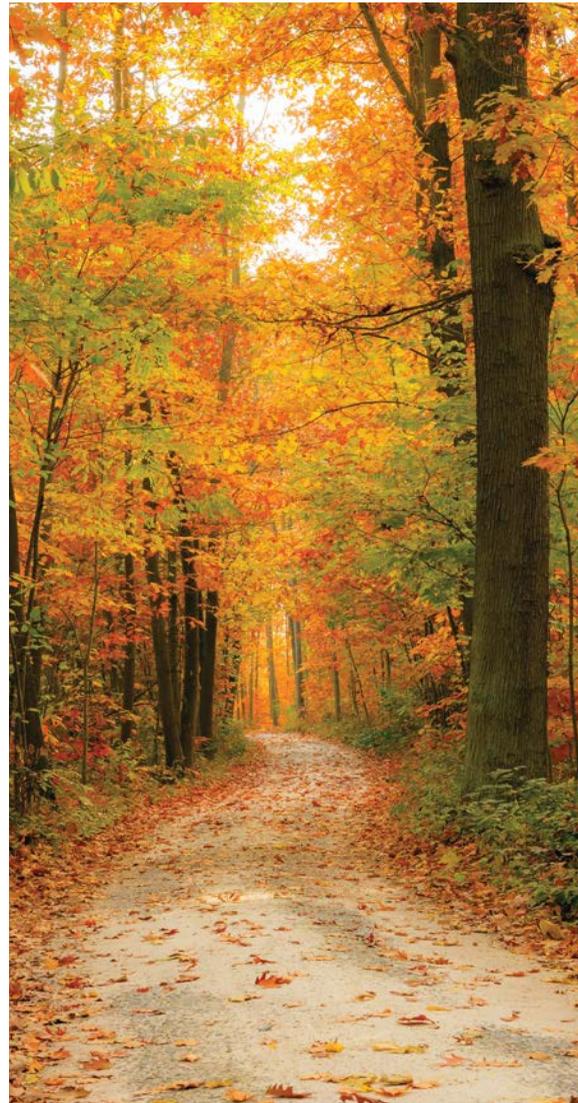


Life Following Loss

To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.
- Thomas Campbell



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Life Following Loss:

Someone close to you has died and grief is a normal response to the loss.

Grief is unique to each person and may include any of the following:

The Physical

- Agitation, restlessness, shakiness
- Fatigue / no energy
- 'Knot in the stomach' feelings
- Tightness in the throat
- Chest pain
- Changes to sleep, digestive and appetite patterns
- Crying

The Emotional

- Sadness
- Numbness and shock
- Irritability and anger (feelings of abandonment, helplessness)

- Loneliness
- Relief (that suffering has ended)
- Fear that we might forget, or that we cannot cope without that person
- Overwhelmed

The Psychosocial

- Anxiety
- Guilt, remorse, regret
- Helplessness and hopelessness
- Painful visual images and remembering
- Memory confusion and forgetfulness
- Social isolation
- Rethinking values and beliefs both religious and spiritual
- Making sense of the loss in order to find meaning

What Can You Do?



1. Try not to speed up the mourning or listen to others who say you are taking too long.
2. Be patient and understanding of yourself, embrace your belief system and treasure your memories.
3. Take time to feel your multitude of emotions. Reflect on your loss and talk about your grief. Writing your thoughts and feelings in a journal can help the healing process.
4. Take care of your physical health and well-being. Be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.
5. Develop or renew a support system and try to have fun. Gradually resume your favourite activities.

6. Learn to live with the experience. Plan for special days such as the first Christmas etc., and plan an escape from social situations if you feel overwhelmed.
7. Attending a bereavement support group provides an opportunity to share your grief with others who have experienced similar losses.

When to Seek Further Help

If you are experiencing physical symptoms or prolonged intense emotions please talk to your family doctor/family health team.

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, self-destructive ideas, or you are worried that your reactions are abnormal, or you feel "stuck in your grief" please seek assistance through your family doctor/primary



care health team or mental health counselor.

If you experienced multiple losses, or the loss was traumatic for you or accompanied by trauma, please seek assistance through your family doctor/primary care health team or mental health counselor.

A Word About Helping Children and Youth

Inform children about death as soon as it seems appropriate – consider the child's age and maturity.

Answer their questions simply and clearly. It is OK to say "I don't know".

It is OK to cry – children model from adults so don't try to manage their grief.

Sometimes children personalize the experience – be sure to clarify your own feelings and demonstrate your ability to function despite the present distress and turmoil.

Be present and responsive to any changes in behaviour, relationships or activities of daily living.

Acknowledgements

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Developed by the Waterloo Wellington Integrated Hospice Palliative Care Bereavement Working Group