



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Lawley



MENTAL HEALTH: GRIEF

Grief is a reaction to a major loss. It is often an unhappy and painful emotion triggered by the death of a loved one or a life-changing event, such as the loss of a job or end of a relationship. People can also experience grief due to an illness or a chronic condition that regularly interferes with their quality of life.

Signs and Symptoms

Everyone deals with grief differently. A major loss can cause a period of sorrow, guilt and even anger. Other signs and symptoms of grief include the following:

- Inability to focus on anything but the loss and problems accepting it
- Bitterness or detachment
- Inability to enjoy life
- Irritability
- Lack of trust in others
- Withdrawal from social activities

Responding to Grief

Usually, symptoms of grief become less burdensome over time, making it possible to accept the loss and move forward. The following responses to grief are keys to recovery and can occur in any order:

- Facing the loss and accepting it as a reality
- Allowing oneself to experience sorrow
- Adjusting to life without the person or thing lost
- Forming new relationships

Treatment

Family and friends can offer emotional support during the grieving process. In some cases, grief fails to improve over time; this is known as complicated grief—an ongoing state of mourning that interferes with one's quality of life.

Psychological counseling may be necessary for anyone who experiences grief longer than two months and has any of the following symptoms:

- Inability to face the loss (characterized by an absence of any emotion)
- Excessive use of drugs and/or alcohol
- Extreme depression associated with grieving
- Suicidal thoughts

Dealing with Reminders

Even after facing and dealing with initial grief, it can recur when confronted with reminders of the loss. An anniversary or birthday, for example, can make people feel as though they are experiencing the loss all over again. Fortunately, these feelings are usually short-term and entirely manageable. The following activities

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can help someone deal with reminders of a major loss:

- Being prepared for and allowing sadness
- Planning a distraction (schedule a gathering with friends, for example)
- Starting a new tradition in reverence to the loss, such as making a donation to a charity

Grief is complicated and elusive—one size definitely does not fit all. It is important for someone to grieve in order to respond to a major loss. It is equally important for others to respect the legitimacy of all forms of grief and provide a helping hand to those who need it.

The following online resources are available for those who need further help dealing with grief:

HelpGuide: www.helpguide.org

Online Grief Support: www.onlinegriefsupport.com

GriefNet: www.griefnet.org