



CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE
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Fact Sheet

COPING WITH BEREAVEMENT

Although this Fact Sheet was created with input from consumers of mental health services, psychologists and psychiatrists, the information is of a general nature. More comprehensive information can be obtained from libraries, including Ontario Division, and your local CMHA branch.

Bereavement is usually a major life event and it may involve a crisis. Coping with death is a very painful experience. It is important to remember that getting over grief takes time and cannot be hurried.

Every individual's grief is unique. You grieve for yourself and your own agony when someone close to you dies. Your feelings run deep and you long with all your heart and soul to see that person again. At the depth of those feelings, lies a basic human desire for your own life and a wish for it to continue.

FEELINGS YOU MAY EXPERIENCE:

- Shock and denial: "I don't believe it."
- Emotional release: "I can't stop crying."
- Loneliness: "I can't make it on my own."
- Pain: "I just can't bear it."
- Panic: "What am I going to do?"
- Anger: "Why did this happen to me?"
- Depression: "Life will never be the same again."
- Guilt: "I could have done more."
- Readjustment: "Knowing I am adjusting to life to please him or her."
- Healing: "I now realize the meaning of friends."

COPING:

The death of someone close is one of life's most stressful events, and your mental health can be affected. It is appropriate to seek and accept support. Few people are able to cope alone with the pain of bereavement. Seeking help is simply one more way of coping, and is a sign of strength and self knowledge. It is best to express your feelings to someone you trust and surround yourself with friends and family. Memories might be painful at first, but they will be a source of comfort in the days ahead.

Be alert for problems such as loss of appetite, insomnia, headaches, nausea, weight loss. If grief becomes too intense, consult your physician, spiritual advisor or contact a local support group.

You may feel at the time that you will never get over it. It never quite goes away, but you can learn to “live around it.” When you stop being sad all the time and begin to feel a zest for life again, a profound change is occurring.

Support is vital. Genuine caring from friends is important. Talk about the person who died and look at photographs to help you remember about the good times.

Remember you are not alone. You may want to contact your family physician or your local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association for information and referrals.