RiverStone Health | Hospice

Grieving After a Death

People grieve in many ways. There is no right way of coping. For some, grief may lead to personal growth, even though the grieving time itself is stressful. The way people grieve can depend on their own personalities, their relationship with the person who died, and on how the person died.

People can have mental, physical, social, and/or emotional reactions to grief.

- Emotional reactions can include anger, guilt, anxiety, sadness, and despair. A person may also feel numb or emotionless.
- Physical reactions can include sleeping problems, changes in appetite, physical problems, or illness.
- Mental reactions can include changes in ability to concentrate, feeling distracted, or having a hard time thinking about anything other than the loss.
- Social reactions can include changes in how you feel about taking care of others in the family, seeing family and friends, or returning to work.

Mourning is the process by which a person adapts to a loss. Mourning can also be influenced by a person's culture, his or her own personality, and by society's rules for coping with loss. You may mourn the death of a loved one by:

- Holding a funeral, memorial service, or other formal time of remembrance for that person.
- Remembering the person in your own time and way.

Grief work describes what grieving people need to do before they are able to fully return to their daily lives. This work can include:

- Figuring out how to put the energy that you once gave to your loved one, to other people or tasks.
- Readjusting to a world that no longer has the loved one in it.

There is usually no way to know how long grief, mourning, or grief work will last. Some of the intense grief feelings may happen in the days, weeks, or months immediately after a death. However, often persons can have a renewed grief response-

-at particular times of the year, on significant anniversary dates, or at unexpected moments when a memory of the person comes back strongly.
Have patience with yourself. Also know that because people grieve differently, those closest to you may not be reacting to a death in the same way you are. They may feel "done" grieving when you are not. They may express their grief more strongly or for a longer time than you. These differences are normal.

What can hospice do to help with grieving?

- It is part of hospice care for RiverStone Health to follow up with a bereaved person in the year after the loved one's death. This follow-up usually includes making periodic phone calls to see how you are doing and offering written information about grief and grief support (usually sent by mail). You can choose not to have this follow-up.
- The RiverStone Health Hospice team offers support groups for grieving children and families, periodically throughout the year. Please call 406.651.6500 for more information.
- Two times a year, RiverStone Health holds its own memorial services for hospice patients who have died. These are times when caregivers, families, and the hospice staff can gather to remember the loved ones they were blessed to know. Invitations to these services are sent out to families of the deceased.
- The RiverStone Health team can offer extra support or make referrals, for persons who are struggling with grief.

When to call RiverStone Health Hospice (406.651.6500):
Please call the RiverStone Health Hospice team if you have questions about coping with grief, or if you are feeling overwhelmed. Especially call if you or someone else is

- Experiencing severe anxiety or depression.
- Having trouble with grief-related substance abuse.
- Having suicidal thoughts.