

Appropriate Expectations for Yourself in Grief

You can expect that:

- Your grief will take longer than most people think.
- Your grief will involve many changes and be continually developing.
- Your grief will show itself in all spheres of your life: psychological, social and physical.
- Your grief will depend upon how you perceive your loss.
- You will grieve for many things both symbolic and tangible, not just the death alone.
- You will grieve not only for what you have lost now but also for what you have lost in the past and for the future.
- Your grief will entail mourning not only for the actual person you lost but also for all the hopes, dreams, and unfulfilled expectations you held for and with that person, and for the needs that will go unmet because of the death.
- Your grief will involve a wide variety of feelings and reactions, not solely those that are generally thought of as grief.
- You may have a combination of anger and depression, such as irritability, frustration, annoyance, or intolerance.
- You may feel some anger and guilt.
- The loss will resurrect old issues, feelings and unresolved conflicts from the past.
- You will have some identity confusion as a result of this major loss and the fact that you are experiencing reactions that may be quite different from reactions you have experienced in the past.
- You may have a lack of self-concern.
- You may experience grief spasms, acute upsurges of grief that occur suddenly and with no warning.
- You will have trouble thinking (memory, organization and intellectual processing) and making decisions.
- You may feel like you are going crazy.
- You may be obsessed with the death and preoccupied with the deceased.
- You may begin a search for meaning and may question your religion and/or philosophy of life.
- You may find yourself acting socially in ways that are different from before.
- You may find yourself having a number of physical reactions.

- You may find that there are certain dates, events and stimuli that bring upsurges of grief.
- Society will have unrealistic expectations about our mourning and may respond inappropriately to you.
- Certain experiences later in life may resurrect intense grief for you temporarily.

Source: How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies, by Therese A. Rando, Ph.D.