



## **ANDROSCOGGIN HOME CARE & HOSPICE**

This is the one of six publications in the grief information series. Each publication addresses specific issues bereaved people may encounter on their journey through grief. The series includes *What is Grief?*; *Feelings of Grief*; *Coping with Grief*; *Different Bonds, Different Grief*; *After the First Year*; and a special issue on *Coping with the Holidays*.

# *Living Through Grief*

## Feelings of Grief

Grief brings up many different emotions, which can be overwhelming, scary and stressful. The purpose of this publication is to describe some of the feelings of grief and offer suggestions for coping with them. A suggested reading list and worksheet are also included.

## Identifying Your Feelings

Death is a natural process in life. But no one is ready for the flood of thoughts and emotions that can overwhelm you after a loved one dies. These emotions are a normal response to the death of a loved one. It is important to allow yourself to feel these emotions so you can move through your grief. Many of the thoughts and feelings you may experience are described below and on the following pages.

### Confusion

Do the simplest decisions seem impossible? Is it difficult to concentrate and follow through on things? Do you feel disorganized and make many mistakes? Confusion comes because you are using all your emotional energy to grieve and very little is left over for anything else. Remember some confusion is normal.

### Sadness

You miss your loved one. You may be unhappy, distressed or heartbroken. Sadness is a normal part of grief.

## Anxiety/Panic

Are you afraid of being alone? Do you worry about the future and fear that something else will happen to another loved one? Do you think you are “GOING CRAZY”? Panic is normal.

**Coping Tip:** Talking about your feelings, crying, or getting active with something may help to lessen the “panicky” feelings.

## Depression

Depression is common in those who are grieving. It hurts so much. Sometimes you just don’t care about anything. It takes effort to get out of bed, shop or fix a simple meal.

**Coping Tip:** It is important to talk things over with a friend or someone who will listen. If these feelings are prolonged over several months and experienced every day, it would be wise to seek a Bereavement Counselor.

## Preoccupation

Your loved one who has died may be in your thoughts constantly. You may think of nothing but the loss. You may even dream of your loved one or be focused on his or her face.

**Coping Tip:** You might try to keep a journal of your thoughts during this time. You will notice these thoughts will lessen over time.

## Guilt

Many people are tortured by “if only” and “what if”. We tend to blame ourselves for things we wish we had done differently for our loved one. Thoughts of guilt are normal but often not helpful.

**Coping Tip:** It is best not to push down the guilt. Talk about it until you can let it go. In time, you will realize you did the best you could.

## Anger

Anger is a very common emotion during grief. You may be angry with yourself or with others, with the person who died or with God. You may also feel anger toward people who push you to accept your loss too soon or who pretend that nothing happened.

Pushing down anger is harmful because it can resurface in physical problems such as ulcers, high blood pressure or depression. Your anger will come out one way or another and may be directed at innocent people and unrelated events. It is often hard to admit to being angry.

**Coping Tip:** It is helpful to find ways to let out your anger, such as screaming in a private place, walking, swimming, or some form of physical exercise.

## Loneliness

After the funeral, relatives and friends may go on with their own lives, leaving you to deal alone with your grief. Co-workers, friends, neighbors and sometimes even family members may avoid you or change the subject. Some people withdraw because they are hurting and do not know how to help.

**Coping Tip:** Support groups can be helpful.

## Despair

“How can I go on?” You may come to the point where the agony seems too much. You cannot bear it. You think you will not be able to survive.

**Coping Tip:** It may be helpful to talk to someone who has made it through grief, or to read about grief. There are many personal accounts of how individuals survived the loss of a loved one.

## Helplessness

“What am I going to do?” You may feel helplessness about your feelings, your grief. You may feel unable to help yourself cope or get better. You may feel unable to help other family members. You may feel self-pity. Although you know you had no control over what happened, you may feel powerless at not having been able to prevent it.

**Coping Tip:** While life may seem out of control, healing is not a passive event. Grief is hard work. Take small steps to re-build your life.

## Envy

You may feel jealous of people who still have their loved ones to enjoy.

**Coping Tip:** Try to take time to let family members and friends who are a source of support know how much you appreciate their help.

## Frustration

Many frustrations are a part of grief. “Why am I feeling so upset for so long?” You may become disappointed with yourself that you are not coping as well as you think you should.

**Coping Tip:** Try to find ways to release your frustration, by calling a friend, writing a journal or going for a walk.

## Bitterness

Some bereaved people feel bitterness toward those whom they feel are responsible for their loved one’s death.

**Coping Tip:** These bitter feelings should be worked on or the bitterness could last for many years. Bitterness drains you of energy.

## Relief (Laughter)

Enjoy the relief that comes with laughter because the grief will return soon enough. You are not being disloyal to your loved one when you enjoy life.

**Coping Tip:** Sometimes it helps to see a comedy movie or video. Or you might talk about the amusing times you had with your loved one.

# The Feeling of Falling Apart

When a loved one dies, feelings of irrationality and absurdity can bombard you. You may feel overwhelmed. Decision-making is difficult; communicating with others is strenuous. You feel clumsy. Completing routine tasks seem nearly impossible. Disorganization and confusion may best describe your life.

Grieving has a way of tearing you down emotionally and physically. All of this is temporary. Even though this is a new experience, you will work through this pain.

## A HEALING THOUGHT

By living one day at a time, you discover simple ways to cope with devastating times.

## Thinking about Grief

These are some of the ways that my grief is affecting me:

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## Suggest Reading List

### **Don't Take My Grief Away**

By Doug Manning  
Insight Books, 1979

### **The Journey Through Grief**

By Alan Wolfelt  
Companion Press, 1997

### **The Path Through Grief**

By Marguerite Bouvard  
Breitenbush Books, 1988

This is one of six publications provided to you by the Hospice Team of Androscoggin Home Care & Hospice. For more information, please call 777.7740 or 1.800.482.7412.