



IN TOUCH

Bereavement Newsletter

Bereavement Department (602) 530-6970 or hov.org

MARCH / APRIL 2026

NORMAL REACTIONS TO LOSS

Grief does not occur in easily defined stages; rather it is a blend of emotional, cognitive and behavioral responses. The death of your loved one will affect the whole of you, body and soul. Your initial and later reactions will be felt and expressed physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

Physical reactions to loss

- The stress of an emotional injury may be expressed through physical symptoms such as fatigue, high blood pressure, muscle tension, headaches, shortness of breath, erratic sleeping and eating patterns, or aggravation of chronic or new medical conditions.
- Nutrition can suffer. In an effort to comfort and nurture yourself, you may eat more or less than usual. Stress can interfere with the absorption of important nutrients, while fats and sugars deplete energy.
- Rest and relaxation are essential. Because rest relieves, restores and refreshes, it is important that you make time for routine “mindless” activity, or get away for a relaxing weekend. You may sleep less or more than usual as a way to avoid or shut out the pain.
- Although grief saps your energy, exercise is good for you. Regular physical activity increases your circulation, stimulates your heart, cleanses your body, discharges negative energy and gets you out and about.
- Human contact is a basic human need. Touching, hugging, holding and having contact with another is comforting and healing.

Suggestions for coping with physical symptoms

- Inform your physician about what is happening in your life, so your health can be monitored.
- Avoid self-medicating and alcohol, which can offer only temporary escape and may have serious side effects.
- Drink lots of water.
- If your diet is not well balanced, try supplementing with vitamins and minerals. Add fruits, vegetables and grains. Eat smaller, more frequent meals rather than three big ones. Eat foods that are easy to fix and digest, and include a special treat now and then.
- Cut back on your caffeine intake, and drink a cup of warm milk or water at bedtime (plain milk is a natural sedative).
- Take a relaxing bath or warm shower before bed.
- Stick to a regular routine; retire and get up at the same time each day.
- Follow a deep relaxation routine; perform deep breathing exercises in bed.
- Listen to music that soothes your soul and decreases tension.
- Visualize being in your favorite pleasant place.

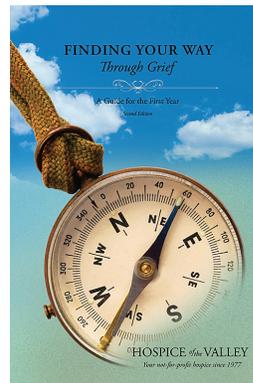
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NORMAL REACTIONS TO LOSS *(continued)*

- Recognize that your thinking processes, coordination and reaction time aren't up to par right now.
- Find an exercise you can do (stretching, walking, swimming, dancing, swinging or swaying to music), and set aside time to do it regularly.
- Ask someone to stay with you to help you focus and prioritize what needs to get done.
- Reach out and touch someone. Cuddle children and pets; hold hands with your friends; get a massage.
- Attend to personal grooming (hair, skin, nails, wardrobe) that will enhance your body image. There is truth in the saying that when you look good, you feel good too.
- You may have difficulty concentrating and remembering, and feel incapable of making the simplest decision.
- You may experience nightmares, dreams and phobias, and you may fear that you're going crazy.
- You may find yourself crying at the slightest provocation or at unexpected moments. Alternatively, you may fear that if you permit yourself to cry, the tears will never stop.
- You may have the pessimistic belief that things will never get any better, as if life and living are useless, and you may even want to die. While not unusual in grief, such thoughts are usually fleeting and simply reflect how desperately you want the pain of loss to end.

Emotional reactions to loss

- For weeks, months, or even years after the death occurs, the shock of loss continues in a wave of disbelieving aftershocks.
- You recognize that your loved one has died, but you're unable to grasp all the ramifications of that reality.
- Even simple tasks like getting out of bed in the morning, tending to personal grooming, fixing a meal or going somewhere with friends may seem overwhelming and exhausting.



This is an excerpt from the book, *Finding Your Way through Grief: A Guide for the First Year*, Second Edition, by Marty Tousley, RN, MS, FT.

If you would like to purchase a copy of this book (\$12), visit <https://hov.org/news/> and click on the "Online Store" link at the bottom of the page.



The only courage that matters
is the kind that gets you from one moment to the next.

—Mignon McLaughlin



Healing from Loss

Hospice of the Valley provides compassionate support to people who are grieving the loss of a loved one. We provide extensive resources to help families as they work toward healing.

Grief support resources

Helpful videos, handouts and information about bereavement events.

Grief support groups

In-person and virtual group sessions are offered Valleywide at no cost.

For the latest information, visit hov.org/our-care/grief-support or call (602) 530-6970



New Song Center

For family grief support that is tailored to parents, young adults, teens and children.

Visit:

hov.org/our-care/grief-support/new-song-center-for-grieving-children





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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bereavement services

Hospice of the Valley provides bereavement support for up to 13 months following the death of your loved one. In-person and virtual support groups and in-person, telephonic or virtual grief counseling support are available. Visit hov.org/grief-support-groups, or call (602) 530-6970 for more information.

New Song Center for Grieving Children

New Song Center for Grieving Children, a program of Hospice of the Valley, provides grief support groups for children, youth, young adults, and adults. Support groups are currently being offered in person for all age groups in Peoria, Gilbert, Scottsdale, and Central and North Phoenix, at no cost to participants.

“Enduring Ties” is an evening support group for families who have experienced the death of a minor child.

“Luz del Corazón” is a support group program for families whose first language is Spanish and who have experienced any type of loss through death.

New Song Center provides one-on-one counseling for brothers and sisters grieving the death of a sibling and additional counseling resources.

For more information, call (480) 951-8985 or (602) 776-6789 (Spanish), email info@newsongcenter.org or view newsongcenter.org.