



## Expectations of Grief

Grief is unique. Grief is hard. It may be the hardest work you've ever done. It is physically and emotionally exhausting. Even when you don't notice it, it is there. There is no script for how your grief journey is going to go. No one can tell you how you should feel or how long you are going to feel it. Your grief is unique and different from anyone else's. Your feelings are valid, regardless if someone else does not feel that way. Grief impacts all areas of your life. These are just a few of the many things you may experience during your grief journey:

As you are traveling this road, I encourage you to be gentle with yourself and be patient. Some days you will feel great and then suddenly, you're in the thick of your loss all over again. Grief is a process and this loss you have experienced will never be forgotten, but the pain you feel will lessen over time. Additionally, the grief journey is unique to each individual. Your partner or spouse will not be grieving the same way that you are. You must communicate and extend each other grace during this time. Men and women differ in so many ways emotionally and grief is no different. Grief will touch every single square inch of your life. These are just a few of things you may experience throughout this journey.

### Physical Effects of Grief:

- ❖ Chest pain or shortness of breath
- ❖ Empty feeling in abdomen
- ❖ Aching arms
- ❖ Fatigue or lack of energy
- ❖ Headache
- ❖ Change in sleep habits-excessive or not sleeping at all
- ❖ Loss of sexual desire
- ❖ Weight changes
- ❖ Restlessness
- ❖ Gastrointestinal symptoms such as constipation, diarrhea, or abdominal pain



### Emotional/Psychological Effects of Grief:

- ❖ Denial
- ❖ Guilt
- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Bitterness
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Mood swings
- ❖ Irritability
- ❖ Sadness
- ❖ Difficulty concentrating
- ❖ Decreased self-esteem
- ❖ Dreams
- ❖ Thoughts of death and dying-if you are having thoughts about taking your own life, please seek help immediately.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline 24/7 1-800-273-8255

### Spiritual Effects of Grief:

- ❖ Increased spirituality or decreased spirituality
- ❖ Anger towards God or higher power
- ❖ Questioning your spiritual beliefs
- ❖ Searching for answers from God or a higher power
- ❖ Finding comfort in prayer
- ❖ Finding no comfort in prayer
- ❖ Feeling abandoned or punished by God or higher power
- ❖ Thinking about how we want to spend the remainder of our lives



### Social Effects of Grief:

- ❖ Avoiding people, places or things that remind you of your loss
- ❖ Feeling isolated
- ❖ Feeling misunderstood by family and friends
- ❖ Feeling sad that no one talks about your baby
- ❖ Avoiding celebrating the holidays
- ❖ Over committing your schedule to avoid feeling and dealing with the pain
- ❖ Becoming a workaholic
- ❖ Not attending family gatherings
- ❖ Avoiding people with babies
- ❖ Not attending baby showers

### Healthy ways to cope with your grief:

- ❖ Exercising may improve your mood and is a great way to release tension and stress
- ❖ When you need to, cry. Tears will come spontaneously and at unexpected times but it is best for you to let them go instead of holding them in.
- ❖ Express your thoughts and feelings through writing or journaling.
- ❖ Find a way to channel your pain in a healthy way. You can make crafts to memorialize your baby, write songs, or start a blog.
- ❖ Do not feel pressured to do something you are not ready to do. If you are not ready to go to a family gathering with your cousin's new baby, do not go. Only you can decide what is right and wrong for you!
- ❖ Many symptoms of grief can last several months but if you experience prolonged difficulty sleeping or eating more than a couple weeks, please seek help from a healthcare provider.
- ❖ Find support with people that understand. Find a support group or your church if there are any other families that have experienced a similar loss. Few people are going to understand your pain and that makes it very difficult. Having people to turn to that understand when times get hard is important.