

# Common Grief Reactions

*'Grieving is a process not a single act'<sup>1</sup>*

Grief has been defined as,

'the human response to change and loss in our lives, such as the death of someone we love, parental separation or other major change. It is a natural and normal response, which has a physical impact on our bodies as well affecting our emotions and our thinking. Grief challenges the way we think about ourselves and the world, and influences our spirituality and relationships.'<sup>2</sup>

## **Physical Reactions**

Excessive tiredness despite sleep

Hollow or churning stomach

Tight chest

Breathlessness

Increased heart rate

Weakness

Dry mouth

More prone to minor ailments

Muscle tightness

Stomach aches and headaches

## **Feelings**

Shock

Sadness

Anxiety and fear (including fear of separation and further loss)

Guilt

Relief

Abandonment

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<sup>1</sup> Mallon, B 'Managing Loss, Separation and bereavement: Best policy and practice'

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.goodgrief.org.au/sites/default/files/Factsheet%20-%20Children%20Grief%20Web.pdf>

Loneliness

Anger

Numbness

Blame including self-blame

Irritability or frustration

**Behaviours**

Restless over-activity or lethargy

Sleep disturbances

Clinging

Vivid dreams

Crying

Social withdrawal

Avoidance of reminders of deceased/absent person

Searching and calling out

Visiting places/treasuring objects linked to the deceased

**Thoughts/cognitions**

Disbelief

If only...

Preoccupation with what has been lost

Sense of presence (of deceased person)

Forgetfulness

Sense of not being present in own body

**Spiritual**

What's it all about?

What is my purpose?