

# The Grief Process

Varied emotions are part of the normal grieving process. At times you may think you have no feelings at all. Other times, you may feel like exploding with anger or sadness. What you are feeling may be quite different from your usual emotional state and can be frightening at times. But these responses are normal. Allow yourself the freedom to express your feelings.

Following are some of the phases that people often experience as they grieve:

## **Shock and Numbness**

Temporarily, you may be so stunned that you feel as though nothing has happened. It may seem as though time has stopped and a fog or cloud surrounds you. You may find yourself forgetting things, feeling confused or having a hard time making decisions. These are normal reactions. Within several weeks, the shock will begin to fade.

## **Searching and Yearning**

You will find yourself looking for every possible link to your loved one. Comfort may come in the form of photographs, clothing or other keepsakes. This time can be confusing because of the many competing emotions you feel: guilt, anger, sadness, restlessness and/or impatience. You may feel physical symptoms such as choking sensations, shortness of breath and a loss of, or increase in appetite. This phase may last as long as four months and will likely return on the anniversary of your loved one's death, birthday or around special holidays.

## **Disorganization and Despair**

During this time, the realization of your loss becomes acutely painful. You may begin to experience increased fears and anxieties, an overwhelming sense of danger and the dread of being alone. You may find it difficult to concentrate or have problems starting or continuing routine projects. You may have difficulty sleeping or feel very depressed. You may feel like you are going crazy, but these feelings will decrease with the passage of time. This is the time to contact those around you who are concerned and able to give support. It is also a good time to join a grief support group.

## **Resolution and Reorganization**

Eventually, you will notice your energy level increasing and your ability to make decisions returning. This does not mean that you will never again feel the pain or that you are forgetting your loved one. It means that you have found a special place in your heart for him or her and are ready to move forward with your life. You will find that you are able to relate to others in a deeper, more meaningful way because of what you've experienced.

## Further Help

In the days, weeks and months ahead, there may be questions you want to ask. Feel free to contact the CARE program office at 909-558-7261 or the Chaplains' office at 909-558-4367.

As you move through the grief process, you may not understand all the emotions that churn inside of you. Such an experience can be fearful. To help you deal with your loss, the chaplains offer grief recovery groups four times each year. The seven week program begins on the first or second Monday of every January, April, July and October. For information and/or registration, please call the Chaplain's Office at 909-558-4367.