



## Loss and Grief

### Grief

- Grief can result from a major change such as a loss in one's life.
- Grief is a normal and often deeply painful **reaction to loss**.
- Grief is a natural part of the healing process.

### Losses Can Include

- Divorce or break-up of an important relationship.
- Death of a loved one.
- Death of comrades (combat or non-combat related).
- Loss of a pet.
- Loss of a sense of safety.
- Loss of meaning and purpose in life.
- Loss of physical health or a physical part of oneself.
- Loss of identity.
- Loss of self-esteem.

There are several warning signs that may suggest a person is having a severe grief reaction and needs help coping. Ignoring the warning signs may make the grief last longer and/or make it more difficult. It is best to seek treatment before problems get worse. **You should contact a professional provider *immediately* if you find yourself:**

- Thinking about or planning to commit suicide or engage in self-harm.
- Avoiding usual self-care routines, such as eating or showering.
- Avoiding or hiding from grieving by:
  - ◇ Not **talking** about the loss.
  - ◇ Not being honest about **thoughts and feelings** you've had since the loss.
  - ◇ Not talking or thinking about **memories** related to the loss.
  - ◇ Unable to function for weeks or months after the loss.
  - ◇ Unable to carry out work, school or family responsibilities.

### Coping with Grief

It's important to keep up a healthy lifestyle during and after grief. People can be hard on themselves following a loss. Remember that it's not just okay to grieve, but that it takes courage to grieve the loss of someone or something important. Here are some things that can help with the grieving process:

- **Be patient.** Take time to grieve. It may not feel like it at first, but with time the pain will ease and it will be easier to get on with normal activities.
- **Join a support group** where personal stories can be shared with others. You'll find that it's often helpful to spend time with others who have gone through a similar loss.
- **Seek helpful people**, such as family or friends, or a chaplain or other spiritual advisor.
- **Seek out professional consultation** with a psychologist or social worker or other healthcare professional if the grieving persists.

### Common Thoughts, Feelings, and Reactions Caused by Loss and Grief

- Denial.
- Disbelief or doubt.
- Confusion.
- Shock.
- Sadness.
- Yearning or longing.
- Anger.
- Shame.
- Despair.
- Guilt.
- Regret.
  
- Feeling empty and/or depressed.
  
- Having a hard time relating to or connecting with others.
  
- Thinking that a part of oneself has died.
  
- Hopelessness about the future.
  
- Thinking things aren't as important as they once were.
  
- Getting tearful or crying easily.
  
- Feeling restless or irritable.
  
- Having an upset stomach, headaches, or other physical pains.
  
- Existing health problems become worse or new physical problems appear.
  
- Loss of appetite.
  
- Having a hard time sleeping or sleeping much more than usual.
  
- Having little energy.