Grief

Grief is a natural reaction to any change and or loss in your life. Grief is a painful experience, but it is a healthy reaction. Times when you may feel grief include:

- The death of someone you love
- The breakup of a relationship or a divorce
- An injury
- A miscarriage
- A handicap
- Changing jobs
- Losing a pet
- Losing property or possessions
- Children leaving home

Everyone has loss or change in their lives at some time. Understanding grief can help you deal with your feelings and accept your loss.

People who are grieving often have feelings of:

- **Shock and denial** – At first you may feel numb and pretend your loss did not happen.
- **Anger** – You may feel angry, especially if your loss seems unfair.
- **Guilt** – You may blame yourself for something you thought you did or did not do.
- **Depression** – Some people may feel sad and helpless. It may become hard to do everyday tasks.
- **Loneliness** – A loss or change may make you feel alone and afraid.
- **Acceptance** – when you can look forward to the future again.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.
Grief may cause changes in your sleep and eating patterns. If you find that you are not sleeping or eating well for several days, seek help from a professional. Grief may also affect your ability to concentrate for a short period of time after your loss. You may not be able to remember things at times.

Grieving may cause you to have feelings and behaviors that are not normal for you. The best thing you can do is to let yourself feel the grief as it comes over you. Fighting these feelings will only delay the process of healing.

The grieving process takes time. Healing happens slowly. There is no “normal” timetable for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, it may take years. It is important to:

- Be patient with yourself and let the process happen.
- Seek help when you need it.

Seek professional help **right away** if you have:

- Feelings of grief that affect your daily life and do not get better with time.
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or others.

### Things that can help when you are grieving:

- **Turn to others for help**
  
  Family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, spiritual leaders and mental health professionals can provide support during your loss. Many times people want to help, but do not know what to do. Tell people what you need. You may have to make the first move.

- **Be kind to yourself**
  
  Pay attention to your health. You may have headaches, nausea, dizziness, heartburn, shortness of breath, weight loss, trouble sleeping or feel very tired. Tell your doctor if these symptoms do not go away. Get plenty of rest, exercise and eat a balanced diet. Do not use alcohol and other substances because they can add to your problems.

- **Take one day at a time**
  
  Do the best you can to get through each day. Have a schedule and try to do one important task each day. Try to eat a healthy diet and rest.
• **Set goals**
  Start a list of some simple activities you want to do, like writing letters or visiting friends. Later you can write down future plans and start working on them. Remember goals and plans can always be changed.

• **Try new activities**
  Sometimes new activities can help. You may want to try joining a club, taking a class, starting a hobby or volunteering. You may not feel like doing anything right away, but trying something new, even for a short period of time, may help you find that you can enjoy life again.

**Other resources for help and information:**

• **Counselors**
  Your doctor, nurse, social worker or hospital chaplain can help you find a counselor if you need one. Individual counseling, group therapy or family counseling may be helpful.

• **Church, Temple, Mosque or Other Places of Worship**
  These can be sources of fellowship and community. Many find it helpful to talk with a spiritual leader about their grief.

• **Bereavement Groups**
  These groups are for people who have lost a loved one. It may help to share your sorrow with others who have also been through a loss.

• **Parents without Partners**
  This is a support group that helps people who are separated, divorced or widowed, and have children.

• **Hospice Care**
  Hospice Care can help people who are at a turning point in their illness and want to focus on comfort care. Hospice programs provide grief support for family members and friends for up to 13 months after the death of a love one.

• **Social Work Organizations**
  Social work organizations and local hospitals can help you find services and support groups in your area.
• **Mental Health Services**
  Mental health organizations and centers may provide education and information about other available services.
  
  ▶ Mental Health America of Franklin County at (614) 221-1441 or visit their website at [www.mhafc.org](http://www.mhafc.org).
  
  ▶ National Mental Health America at 1-800-969-6642 or visit their website at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net) for health information and help finding treatment and support groups.
  
  ▶ Ohio Psychological Association at 1-800-783-1983 or visit their website at [www.ohpsych.org](http://www.ohpsych.org) to connect with a psychologist who specializes in grief counseling in your local area.

• **Community Resources**
  
  ▶ HandsOn Central Ohio (formerly First Link) offers 24-hour referrals by calling 211, or visit their website at [www.handsoncentralohio.org](http://www.handsoncentralohio.org).

Remember that the pain from grief gets better, but the healing process takes time.