

Ask Your Therapist

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Grief - Recognizing It, Coping With It and Moving On From It

Grief, or bereavement, is one of the many experiences in Life that are natural and expectable and do not require the services of a trained professional unless they last longer or are more intense than what a person can handle on their own.

Grief is a natural reaction to the death or loss of a loved one. Normal grieving includes feelings of sadness, depression, poor or exaggerated appetite, insomnia, fatigue, loss of interest in daily activities, unexpected or uncontrollable waves of emotion such as sorrow, and anger.

There is no amount of time that is normal for grief to last and factors such as the culture of the person grieving, and the relationship between the mourner and the departed, are key factors. Generally, an intense grief reaction can take from 3 to 12 months or more to resolve and some feelings of grief never go away completely.

Therapist are consulted when the mourners have prolonged or intense feelings of major depression, insomnia, loss of appetite, guilt, thoughts of death for oneself, morbid preoccupation with feeling of worthlessness, hallucinations about the person lost or dead or a general inability to function at a normal level of skill.

The bereavement process is further complicated when the mourner has a conflicted relationship with the departed. For example, if a parent abused or neglected his/her child, then even as an adult those feelings from childhood are still there and when the parent dies, the possibility of resolving and moving past those feelings gets much more difficult to do, and the possibility of reconciliation is lost.

In my next few columns I will talk about pet bereavement, child bereavement, and the grief people have who have invisible losses such as miscarriages, etc.

Krishnabai, MSW is a therapist in Ashby and Wellesley Hills where she sees adults, older teens and couples. The core of her work is the discovery and expression of the Authentic Self. She focuses on the identification, expression, and resolution of emotions, commitment to honesty and the use of remedial education and information. The Ashby Center for Counseling 978-386-5657