

A close-up photograph of a person's eye, looking slightly to the right. A single tear is visible on the lower eyelid, about to fall. The background is a soft, out-of-focus skin tone. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

GUIDE TO DEALING WITH GRIEF

FOR TEENAGERS WHO HAVE
EXPERIENCED A RECENT LOSS



INCLUDING SIGNS,
SOLUTIONS AND
EVERYTHING ELSE
YOU NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT GRIEF

THE GRIEVING PROCESS

1. Realizing your loss

Sometimes you may realize the traumatic event that has occurred right away but for others it may take a few days to sink in. At this time usually funerals and other events occur to help accept the loss. Funerals can be difficult so preparing yourself for the day, bringing someone to accompany you and only doing what feels comfortable (i.e. don't see the body if it makes you uncomfortable) are some helpful tips to keep in mind.

2. Feeling & expressing grief

Often grief is felt in four main subtopics; physical, emotional, social and spiritual. But everyone copes differently, some people isolate themselves from society and hold in their feelings whereas some become closer to others and express their feelings. Not to say that one is better than the other and sometimes people just need time however it is important to talk about it at some point whether it be with someone who was connected to the person or not. There will always be friends, family, neighbors, teachers or support groups that would be happy to listen to your feelings and thoughts. Pick someone you trust and know will value your feelings. This is also a good time to think about one good memory you have of the person that they would want you to remember and perhaps celebrate them by making a scrapbook, memorial project or anything else of your choice. Although it's a tough time try to remember the person's existence in a positive way but at the same time allow for yourself to be upset.

3. Accepting the loss


It's important to accept that things will be different in your life now, you may have to change traditions if they are now too difficult to handle and cause too much work. Don't make these decisions alone though, discuss and make decisions with family & friends. Most importantly just recognize the things in your life that will remain the same and the things that will change now that the person is gone.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF


- Exhaustion
- Pains & aches (ie. head, back, neck)
- increased anxiety (anxiety attacks)
- Trouble breathing properly
- loss of appetite (result in weight loss)
- Comfort eating (result in weight gain)
- Fear or trouble sleeping
- Inability to focus and concentrate

It is common and extremely normal to experience physical symptoms alongside our emotional ones because our bodies respond to our feelings. Lots of rest and activity can be helpful to aid these symptoms. Joining an individual or team sport is a great way to increase energy level and let out the inside anger & frustration. Although If you begin to become overwhelmed with visions and voices of your lost one that is causing trouble with sleep and concentration or begin showing some of their behaviors it is important to seek professional help.

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

- 
- Sadness (crying)
 - Regrets (upset about last word said/not said to the person or you could have done more to help)
 - Anger
 - Anxiety
 - Guilt
 - Negative thoughts

During the process of grieving these unnerving feelings are normal to experience especially since this is probably the first time in your life someone has died. It is important to remember feeling these different emotions is not a sign of weakness however don't let the anger or regret harm yourself and others. Some ways to release these emotions are punching or screaming into a pillow, crying, involving in a sport and/or talking to someone about the person you lost. If at first you feel nothing this is normal, because you are probably in shock about what happened, but if this feeling of nothing continues you should seek help from a professional to help find those inside feelings.

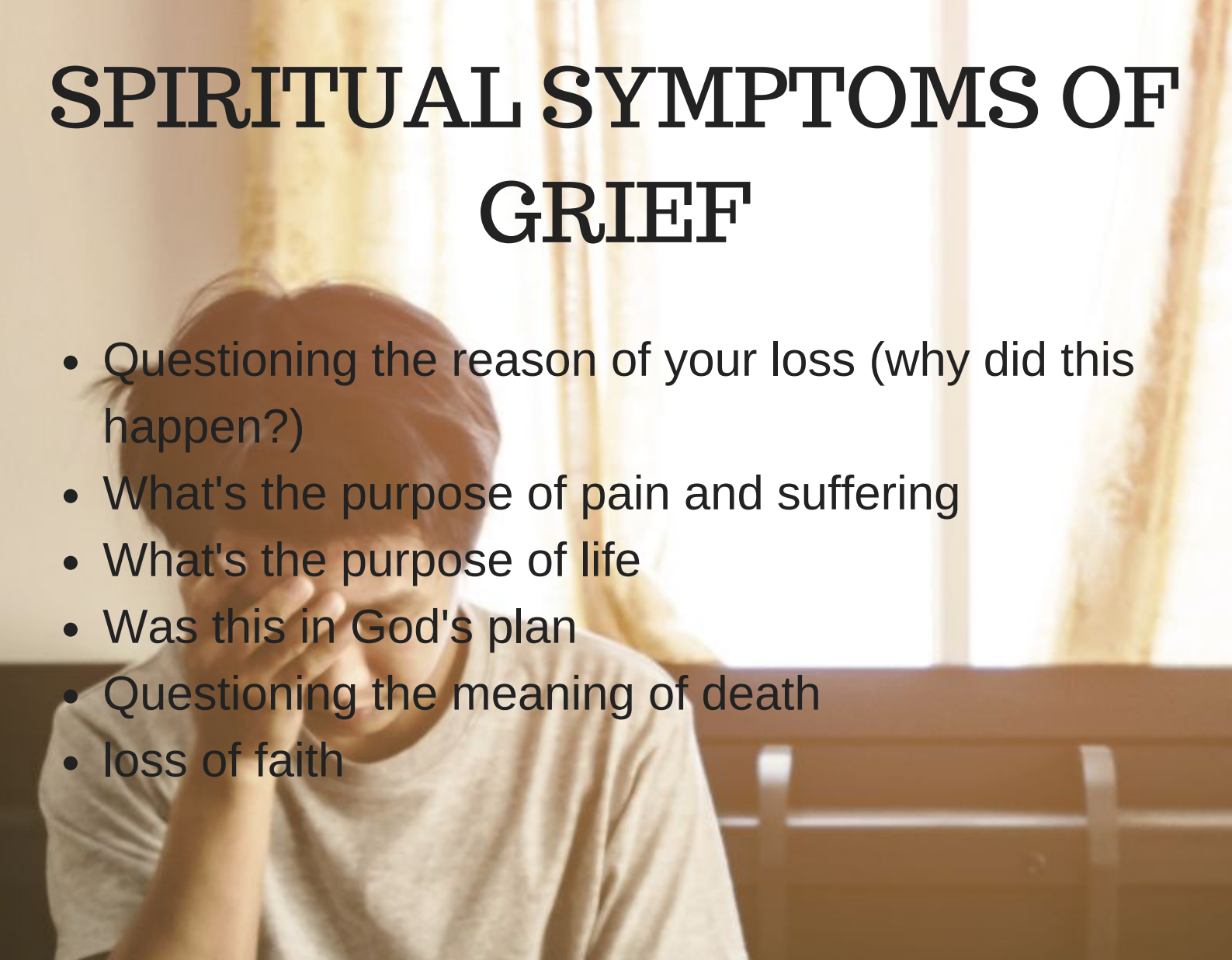


SOCIAL SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

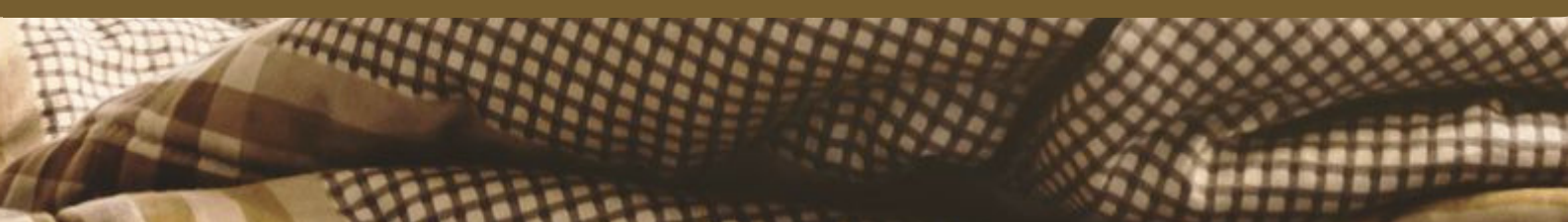
- Detachment from others (i.e. family, friends, co-workers)
- Isolation (from activities, school, or even society)
- Disinterest in activities you used to enjoy
- Irritable

Social symptoms are another normal aspect of the grieving process because we change after the loss of someone really important to us. It is hard to let others in because most people feel they just don't understand, so isolation just seems easier. There are other people who you may find avoid you because they don't know how to help or what to say but just keep in mind it's nothing you did and they will forget soon. Over time your social life will slowly begin to become more normal and people will stop treating you differently. However do keep in mind some social relationships will be different. Although it may be hard it is important to talk about it with others but it's okay to wait until your ready. If you are not able to attend any social activities for a long period of time you may want to seek professional help.

SPIRITUAL SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

- 
- Questioning the reason of your loss (why did this happen?)
 - What's the purpose of pain and suffering
 - What's the purpose of life
 - Was this in God's plan
 - Questioning the meaning of death
 - loss of faith

Spiritual health is an individual way of handling grief and it is very common to question why this happened to you and why something bad like this had to happen. There is no set way to spiritually grieve but, but taking part in your religions rituals, saying a new prayer for your lost the next time you're at church, joining a religious group or just holding onto that little bit of faith you have left can seem comforting and supporting when nothing else does. It's normal to feel angry at God at first but if you begin to feel any suicidal thoughts or that life no longer serves you a purpose you must seek professional help right away.



GETTING HELP

When to get help?

Although physical, emotional, social and spiritual symptoms are normal elements in grieving there are cases when grieving can develop complications and leave the normal range. If you are or begin to experience any of the situations or symptoms below it's time to get professional assistance.

- If you hear voices that scare you or tell you to harm yourself and others
- You feel you can't stop yourself from harming yourself
- Feeling of hopelessness or detachment from others for more than a few weeks
- constant thoughts about death
- Extreme behavioral changes that worry you (i.e. smoking drugs, consuming more alcohol)
- You feel your grieving isn't getting better over time
- If you feel you have developed clear symptoms of depression or anxiety

Who to go to for help?"

There are many people that are great for talking about your loss or just for helping you to grieve like family, friends & teachers. However, once the grieving has become serious like one of the items listed above you really need help from a registered professional. All of the people listed below are excellent options when needing to seek professional help.

- Family doctor
- Psychiatrist
- Social worker
- Psychologist
- Licenced counsellor
- Nurse practitioner
- General practitioner

OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION SOURCES

Online

- The center for complicated grief
- American physiological association
- National alliance of grieving children
- Modern loss
- What's your grief
- The grief toolbox

Books

- The Year of Magical Thinking
- On Grief and Grieving
- Art of losing: Poems of grief and Healing
- When a friend dies: a book for teens about grieving and healing
- The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends
- Bridge to Terabithia

References

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