What is Grief?

Grief is mourning after any kind of loss. It is a normal, healthy response to the loss of your health or the health of a loved one through a disease such as cancer. Every person will experience grief at some time. We all feel it in our own way.

A person in grief may feel shock, disbelief, longing, anger, sadness, and acceptance. It can help to view grief as a process. Feelings may change, end, and come back. Grief may never go away completely, but the pain it causes will lessen over time as you work through your feelings.

Physical Signs
- Diarrhea
- Dizziness
- Fast heartbeat or tightness in the chest
- Feeling like there's a lump in your throat
- Headaches
- Hyperventilating or shortness of breath
- Loss of appetite or weight loss
- Nausea
- Tiredness
- Trouble sleeping

Emotional Signs
- Anger
- Crying spells
- Loneliness
- Restlessness and irritability
- Sadness or depression

Mental Signs
- Disorganization and lack of concentration
- Self-blame
- Sense that what's happening isn't real

Grief is a normal reaction to loss and an important part of working through it.

How Long Does Grief Last?

How long grief lasts is different for every person. Once you begin to accept your loss, you may start to feel better in small ways. For example, you may find it's a little easier to get up in the morning, or you may have small bursts of energy. You'll begin to reorganize your life around your loss.

What Can I Do?

- Know that it’s OK to grieve—to cry, to feel numb, to be angry, or to feel however you’re feeling.
- Talk about how you’re feeling with friends, family, clergy, a counselor or support group, or your health care provider.
- Ask for help if you need it.

Adapted from the American Academy of Family Physicians’ Grieving: Facing Illness, Death, and Other Losses and Support for Your Journey through Grief by Kathie Supiano, LCSW, with Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program at the University of Utah

What Are Signs of Grief?

People experience grief differently—there is no right or wrong way. Grief can affect you physically, emotionally, and mentally.

Huntsman Cancer Institute’s Patient and Family Support team is a resource for people with grief.

Our team is available Monday–Friday from 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

To learn more or make an appointment, call 801-585-9755.

www.huntsmancancer.org/pfs