



ILLNESS AND GRIEF...WHAT TO EXPECT

The many changes that occur during the course of a serious illness mean that patients and their families are continually dealing with losses...of past abilities, of present lifestyle, of hopes and plans for the future. The unfamiliarity and intensity of these losses and the accompanying grief reactions can create further uncertainty and stress in people's lives. The following information touches on some of what might be expected during this time.

It is not unusual for people to experience grief reactions...

- in different ways, at different times
- that show up in all spheres of life: psychological, social, physical, spiritual
- that involve a wide variety of thoughts and feelings; some expected, some not expected
- that vary depending on how the losses or changes are perceived
- that resurrect old issues, feelings or unresolved losses from the past

It is not unusual to feel...

- a combination of anger and depression: e.g. irritability, frustration, annoyance, intolerance
- guilt in some form
- a lack of self-concern or self-esteem
- spasms of acute upsurges of grief that occur without warning
- unsure in making decisions, vague, forgetful
- like they are going crazy
- preoccupied or obsessed with the illness or dying
- overwhelmed, confused
- fatigued by amount of energy required to deal with changes and losses
- question personal beliefs and the meaning or purpose of life
- feel a burden to family or friends
- mourn the loss of hopes, dreams and unfulfilled expectations

It is not unusual to experience...

- different reactions to others, individually and in social situations, e.g. withdraw from or respond inappropriately to others
- unrealistic expectations from others about a variety of things: e.g. your coping skills, attitudes or behaviours