

Identifying Your Feelings

Circle all of the emotional states that best describe how you are generally feeling at this point in your bereavement.

Of the feelings you circled, which three are most intense right now ?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Afraid

You're scared of what life will be like now. You may be fearful about your ability to cope emotionally, or you may be uncertain about practical concerns like money, raising the children, or where you'll live. You may just feel afraid, without really knowing why.

Angry

Anger often feels like a physical thing. Your muscles tense up, and you may feel like yelling at someone or hitting something. Your rage may be aimed at yourself or your lost loved one, or you may find yourself getting angry at other people, society, or your spiritual beliefs.

Anxious

Anxiety is distinct from fear, and is often a generalized feeling. If you're afraid, at least you know what scares you. If you're anxious, on the other hand, you're likely to feel agitated without knowing exactly why. You may experience cold sweats, hyperactivity, or edginess.

Ashamed

You may feel that you should be getting over your feelings, or may be ashamed to show them in front of family, friends, and others. You may also harbor feelings about the death, or the fact that you are still alive, that feel shameful to you and are difficult to share with others.

Bitter

Life may feel very unjust, and you may feel cheated and disappointed. You may feel jealous and resentful toward others who still have what has been taken from you, and you may feel victimized by fate.

Confused

You may be unsure of what you're feeling, or your feelings may change quickly. Your thoughts may be unfocused, and it may be difficult to concentrate; or you may have a hard time knowing what to do and how best to make decisions.

Depressed

Depression can be a general mood of melancholy, or a full-blown experience that is all-encompassing and seems to have no end. In a major depression your mood, appetite, sleep, memory, and ability to concentrate are seriously impaired. You may feel the impulse to do self-destructive things in an effort to find relief.

Despairing

Here you feel a sense of futility. It seems as though things will never get better, and the distress caused by the death may feel unbearable. Although you want to, you may not be able to get your feelings out by crying, or you may be unable to stop crying.

Detached

You feel disconnected from the death and detached from life in general. The experience seems unreal, as if it were happening to someone else. You simply pass through life each day, your actions detached from your thoughts and feelings.

Guilty

You may feel that you could have done more to help your loved one or to prevent the death. You may feel intense regret about the way you behaved toward your loved one, or promises you never kept. You may also feel guilty about negative feelings you harbor toward your loved one, or mixed feelings about the death itself. It is also common for the bereaved to feel guilty when they begin to laugh and find pleasure in life once again, or begin new relationships. Or you may experience survival guilt—a sense of remorse that you remain alive while your loved one has died.

Helpless

Things seem out of your control. You may think that if you were powerless to prevent the death, then you can't handle anything. You can't cope with the practicalities of everyday life, and feel unable to control or manage your feelings.

Hopeless

Life has no meaning. It seems there is no point to anything, and things will never get better. Your feelings and the tasks you face seem insurmountable, and you feel unable to ever overcome your loss.

Lonely

There is no one that can understand your pain. There seems to be no one to share things with or seek comfort from. These feelings may make you feel like withdrawing even further from those around you, or from the world at large.

Lost

Everything that you used to believe in is gone. You aren't sure where you fit in the world, or who you are. If you are religious or spiritual, your faith is shaken. If you are not, you feel it unwise to ever have faith in a world where nothing seems permanent.

Numb

You are shut down emotionally. You feel nothing. Everything is flat. Although you might be able

to function and get through each day, it sometimes seems as if you are sleepwalking through life, unable to feel your emotions.

Sad

Sorrow and heartbreak color everything. You feel your loss deeply, and it affects and pervades all you do. It is a mood that simply won't go away.

Shocked

You are bewildered and confused. Even if you were prepared for the death, the situation doesn't seem real. The finality of the situation leaves you feeling stunned, and you may not be able to accept that your loved one is gone. You keep hoping to wake up from a bad dream.

Overwhelmed

You simply can't cope with the barrage of emotions, thoughts, and changes facing you. You feel like running away, or escaping by using alcohol or drugs. You want someone to come and rescue you, and make it all go away.

Preoccupied

You can't stop thinking about your loss. Perhaps you keep replaying certain scenes over and over in your mind, or agonize about who you might lose next. You can't concentrate on your everyday responsibilities or engage in a conversation without your mind wandering. Intrusive memories keep surfacing no matter what you do.

Vulnerable

Your faith in your own invulnerability is shattered. You are constantly aware of your own mortality, and the mortality of other important people in your life. You feel exposed, without protection, to whatever destiny or life hands you.

Yearning

You long for the deceased. It hurts so much that you feel a constant pit in your stomach. You are constantly aware of the absence of your loved one, and you feel empty. Nothing can fill the void.

