

# Manifestations of “Normal Grief”

*As defined by William Worden in “Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy” Third Edition 2002:*

## COGNITIONS

**Disbelief:** Often called “denial” Extremely common when first hearing of the loss a thought occurs “this is not happening” “there is a mistake”. This feeling can continue intermittently for months but gradually declines over time.

**Confusion:** “Many newly bereaved people say their thinking is very confused they can’t seem to order their thought they have difficulty concentrating or they forget things” (W. Worden p.16 Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy). It is not uncommon to misplace things, feel distracted and forgetful during your grief process. People often speak of feeling “like I am going crazy.” In early grief because their thought process is so disorganized particularly in early acute grief. If this symptom persists and you become concerned do not hesitate to see a physician.

**Preoccupation** about the deceased: This may present itself as constant thoughts about your loved one, remembering all the places you went together and reminiscing. It often presents as intrusive thoughts or obsession with the deceased in early acute grief. Some people experience flashback images of their loved one’s final days. As grief is a natural adaptive process these images will decrease as positive images increase for you. Some people find it helpful to consciously think of a positive image of their loved one when they have these flash backs of final days. Consciously remember your loved one as young, healthy and strong. Even look at a photo of them when healthy. Overtime the healthy images will dominate your thoughts. If this natural adaptive process does not occur for you and you continue for months or over a year to have any negative images dominate your thoughts – seek professional support.

**Sense of Presence:** Worden says “this is the counterpart to the experience of yearning. The grieving person may think that the deceased is somehow still in the current area of time and space” (W. Worden p. 16). Many people report a comfort in feeling their loved one’s presence. Some people speak of receiving signs from their loved one as well. These experiences can bring comfort and reassurance as long as they are not causing distress or harm to the bereaved or others. Examples of signs include but are not limited to – images in nature such as a butterflies, dragon flies or ladybugs, cardinals or other birds, rainbows; coins such as pennies, or dimes. If such signs cause any distress or harm seek medical attention and advice.

**Hallucinations:** Bereaved commonly speak of hearing or seeing their deceased loved one. Again similar to the sense of presence, many find this comforting. These experiences usually retreat over time. Bereaved will find their own interpretation of these experiences based on their own belief system and spirituality.