

Manifestations of “Normal Grief”

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

- ❖ **Feelings**
- ❖ **Physical Sensations**
- ❖ **Cognitions**
- ❖ **Behaviors**

FEELINGS

Numbness

Early in grieving process – usually right after hearing of the death (and through the services and first month or so)

A protection from the flood of feelings

“We found no evidence that it (Numbness) is a unhealthy reaction. Blocking of sensation as a defense against what would otherwise be overwhelming pain would seem to be extremely normal” Parkes & Wiess, 1983, p.55)

Sadness

Crying, or not crying, a fear of sadness, especially the fear of its intensity, blocking sadness and tears through excessive activity

Not allowing the sadness or tears can lead to complicated bereavement

Anger

Manifestations: a sense of frustration of nothing to prevent the death, also a regressive experience that occurs after the loss of someone (ex: loosing mom in grocery store as child. Being angry when you find each other)

Can be confusing to be mad at the deceased, or God,

Turning anger inward is a risk factor for complicated grief

If the anger is not properly acknowledged it can lead to complicated bereavement

Guilt and Self Reproach

Feeling you have not been kind enough

Not taking the person to the hospital soon enough, or not signing on Hospice soon enough, Guilt and questioning around giving the last dose of medication

Reality testing is usually something the person can do to reduce this feeling

Anxiety

Sources of Anxiety: “I won’t be able to survive without him” and a heightened sense of personal death awareness-awareness of one’s own mortality heightened by the death of a loved one. Light anxiety or intense anxiety that subsides is normal.

If the anxiety intensifies or is persistent it may lead to complicated grief reactions such as panic attacks or phobias.

Loneliness

Particularly those who have lost a spouse, or had a close day-to-day relationship with the deceased

Sometimes loneliness shows up as the need to be touched.

“Social support can help with social loneliness but does not mitigate against emotional loneliness due to a broken attachment” Worden-

Fatigue

Apathy or listlessness

“I can’t get out of bed in the morning” “so tired all the time”

If fatigue continues (for many months) it may be a sign of depression

Helplessness

Sense of being unable to manage your world as you used to.

Needing help – balancing the checkbook, doing laundry, cleaning.

Shock

Even when there has been a long lingering illness there is still shock.

Yearning or “Pining” for the lost one

Or Emancipation

If the person was a tyrant, abusive, or in some way held the survivor down

Relief, particularly if there was a long lingering illness and/or dementia