

# **Bereavement**

**By Lynne Campbell-Gillies**

Dealing with the loss of someone close to us is a subject that affects us all.

Each person will react to loss in their own way. How one responds to loss is influenced by a combination of factors such as the type of loss (what was the relationship to the person who died? How did the person die?), our unique coping styles and personalities, our life experiences, and the support we have in coping with loss. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross described five stages of grief as denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. These are useful tools to help us try and understand our roller-coaster feelings which may include some or all of these stages, and often these stages cycle back and forth, varying in intensity of emotion.

Feelings such as fear, anxiety, anger, guilt, depression, and lack of concentration are common. So are physical changes such as decreased energy, sleep difficulties, digestive problems, weight loss or gain, heart palpitations, restlessness and nervousness. Whilst we can't predict the course or duration of our grieving, it is comforting to know that life has a way of healing the hurt, the intensity of the pain of loss gradually lifts, and in time we regain our meaning and purpose in life.

Some important strategies for coping with the death of a loved one include:

Taking care of yourself by talking about your loved one to others and to God; writing down your feelings and memories in the form of a journal or diary; consider planting a remembrance garden or support an organization that was important to your loved one; getting sufficient sleep; taking care to avoid toxins or any lifestyle habits that compromise your energy and immune functioning (remember your body is in a state of shock and stress); exercising and eating well. Obtain appropriate emotional support such as listening to uplifting music, being with supportive friends and/or relatives; find comfort with religious/spiritual readings; anticipate deep sadness on anniversary dates, or visits to special places reminding you of the lost person. If necessary seek professional or lay counselling to help process your grief.

For death begins with life's first breath

And life begins at touch of death

---John Oxenham

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