



T.C. AİLE VE SOSYAL HİZMETLER BAKANLIĞI
AİLE VE TOPLUM HİZMETLERİ
GENEL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ

BEREAVEMENT IN ADULTS and LIVING WITH GRIEF



In cooperation with the Ministry of Family and Social Services and UNICEF.

What Happens During the Grief Process?

During the grief process, a person tries to cope with negative feelings and thoughts, accept death and adapt to life again. In the early stages, having difficulty in grasping death and being unable to react to death, freezing (i.e., frozen grief) or denying death might be the case. Later on, anger and irritability might be seen instead.



In the next stage, thoughts such as "If I did it this way, maybe ... would be alive" might arise. Lastly, even though the grief and longing that occurred after the death continue, life starts going back to normal with the gradual acceptance of death.

The intensity of the reactions decreases over time, plans for the future are made and people start to feel better emotionally. Learning to live with loss and grief does not mean forgetting or getting used to the absence of the deceased.



The following reactions are the usual reactions to the sudden and unexpected death of a loved one.

The Most Common Reactions to Loss

Physical reactions

- ✔ Headache, stomach ache, back pain, and fatigue,
- ✔ Changes in the sleep pattern (Being unable to sleep, excessive sleep, being unable to onset sleep, interrupted sleep),
- ✔ Increased or loss of appetite,
- ✔ Tension, anxiety, restlessness,
- ✔ Shortness of breath, chest pain, heart palpitations, muscle strains/twitches, etc.

Emotional reactions

- ✔ Freezing, not accepting the death, not feeling anything,
- ✔ Experiencing emotions such as sadness, anger and fear excessively; being alone, gloomy, desperate, having no desire towards life and feeling hopeless,
- ✔ Feeling guilty about not being able to prevent the death of the loved one or surviving,
- ✔ Having regrets about the things that were or were not done regarding the deceased,
- ✔ Wanting to be with the deceased, feeling that it is not fair, etc.



Mental reactions

- ☑ Having intense thoughts about not getting to say goodbye,
- ☑ Having intense thoughts about recent experiences, regrets and
- ☑ Longing, having difficulties in memorizing and focusing,

Behavioral reactions

- ☑ Being unable to cry or in a state of constantly crying,
- ☑ Getting angry easily, being aggressive,
- ☑ Acting in ways that will harm themselves,
- ☑ Decrease in problem-solving skill,
- ☑ Deterioration in personal relationships,
- ☑ Postponement, delay or failure to complete work, home and school responsibilities,



- ☑ Avoiding places, people, conversations or activities that remind them of the deceased or talking too much about the deceased, being unable to leave the places that remind them of the deceased,
- ☑ Starting to use addictive substances or increase in the use of addictive substances when compared to the pre-incident period.

Suggestions to Help You Live with Loss

- You might feel that your world is turning upside down right after the loss you have experienced. In such situations, you should strive to gradually return to your daily routine. You should slowly start trying to take care of your tasks regarding work or housework, eat regularly and sleep. Pay attention to your health and self-care.



- Talk to people you trust, relatives or those with similar losses about the incident and share your pain. Talking to your family or friends, and being understood and supported in a difficult time will be of great help to you.



- When you come across incidents, places, photographs or belongings that remind you of the deceased, try to face it by spreading it over weeks when you feel ready. You can remove the photographs whenever you want or look at them when you are ready to recall your memories.



- You can give away or hide the clothes and belongings of the person that you lost whenever you are ready.
- You can attend the funeral and express condolences as much as possible, pray after the deceased according to your religious beliefs and fulfill your religious duties.
- At first, it is normal for your attention and thoughts to gravitate toward what happened in the past (what you did, what you could not do, what was done to you). As time goes by, you can start leaning toward the things you need to do today and in the future.
- Try to be patient with yourself and your close ones.
- Everyone can mourn differently. While some get very introverted or cry, some bury themselves in work and never cry. Be understanding of others and their own ways to mourn. Make an effort to spend this process with respect and love by creating environments to talk to each other.





- Think about how you overcame the difficulties so far. Remember how you dealt with problems and pain before.
- Even if the loss you suffer is above anything else, remind yourself how you survived other difficulties and managed to stand tall.
- Do not ignore your strength.
- Remember that you cannot control every incident and that death is inevitable.

Do not hesitate to seek help from a mental health professional if you feel desperate and have problems coping.



Suggestions to Help Mourning Closed Ones:

DON'T'S!

- Different people might have different perceptions and feelings about their loss and different ways of grief. Therefore, do not compare the grief of a person with others. Do not compare losses and pain.
- Do not ignore death or underestimate the grief just to help.
- Try not to use expressions that might weaken the meaning of the loss, such as "time heals all wounds", "this too shall pass", "please don't cry anymore", and "everything will be fine".
- Do not give recommendations or advice to the bereaved. Do not use expressions such as "Come on, you have to be strong, may God protect you from worse, you should not be so weak, you are the head of this house now, ... watches you and is getting upset right now".
- People might lose their homes, cars, workplaces, furniture, and gardens after a disaster or emergency. Try not to use expressions such as "Better to lose goods than a life, you will work, and you will earn it again" regarding financial loss.



If you have to explain that someone has died, you should consider the following:

- Make sure that the loss of a person is not trying to be kept secret and ensure that it is explained without any delay.
- Before announcing the death of someone, try to find a safe place where the person can react and sit freely.
- If the person has a chronic disease, make ready the things you might need such as medications, water and napkin, etc.
- If the person has a chronic disease and is elderly, if possible, try to talk to them in the presence of a health worker.
- Ensure that other family members or close ones, whom the person can trust and feel their support, are present.
- You can initiate the conversation with sentences such as "I have something upsetting to say. "Unfortunately..."".
- Give accurate, brief and clear information about the loss. Be careful not to give detailed information in cases where unsettling images were observed.
- Try to answer repetitive questions with patience.
- Stay with them, share their sorrow and sadness.



Suggestions to Help Mourning Closed Ones:

DO'S

- Listen to them and be close to them. Allow them to speak, cry, get angry and react in ways that will help them live their grief.
- Since it will help the person accept death, try using past tense when talking about the deceased.
- During the mourning period, they will want to tell memories of the deceased relative or their financial and emotional loss over and over again.
- They will tell less and less with time. Patiently listen to them and make them feel that you are with them.
- Instead of making them remove the belongings of the deceased immediately, allow time to face them over time.
- Take care of their children or those they provide care for, be in solidarity. Support them in issues related to nutrition, routines at home, and material and spiritual needs of their own and of those they provide care for.
- People who lost someone and are going through a period of grief might be prone to make sudden and significant decisions such as having another child, remarrying, moving, and starting a business. Encourage them to wait for a while to make significant decisions, if possible.
- The person might turn to addictive substances to relieve the pain of the loss. You can talk to them about the negative consequences this situation might have in the future.
- You can encourage them to return to work life if they are working individuals, to attend school if they are students, or to adopt a hobby in line with their interests if they do not work or retired.



When Should You Consult A Mental Health Professional?

- If the intensity of grief reactions does not diminish with each passing day,
- If they experience intense emotions such as worthlessness, guilt, hopelessness and fear that affect their daily life,
- If insomnia, excessive weight loss or gain continue,
- If distraction and forgetfulness lead to serious mistakes,
- If they cannot meet their basic needs such as eating, drinking, and bathing; cannot carry out routines to maintain their health,
- If they have thoughts of self-harm or harming others,

A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHOULD BE CONSULTED IMMEDIATELY.





Remember!

You can seek help from psychosocial support staff deployed in times of disaster and emergency through provincial directorates of the Ministry of Family and Social Services.



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**FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND COUNSELING IN CASE OF
NEED:**

..... Provincial Directorate of Family and
Social Services Address:

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Phone: