



## **WHAT IS NORMAL OR HEALTHY GRIEF**

Grief can show itself in many ways – here are some examples:

1. Physical reactions: tightness or lump in throat or chest, shortness of breath, tendency to sigh, hollowness/emptiness/discomfort/pain in the abdomen, aching arms, dry mouth, over sensitivity to noise, a sense of depersonalization, muscle weakness, loss of coordination, lack of energy, loss of sleep or appetite, over sleeping or eating, shaking, tremor, inability to concentrate, feeling heavy or weighted down.
2. Emotional reactions: feelings of loneliness, anger, guilt, fear, depression, isolation, sadness, yearning, inability to feel good or happy, feeling disorganized or confused, crying.
3. Psychological and social reactions: a desire to withdraw from others, a desire to talk about your relationship with the deceased, a desire to tell stories about the deceased, feeling like the person is in the room, having dreams of the person, hearing the person's voice or thinking you see them, not wanting to burden others, difficulty with interpersonal relationships, avoiding people places and things that are reminders of the deceased.
4. Spiritual reactions: Losing or decreasing faith/religious connections, searching for answers to and meaning in life, searching for meaning in death or for what happens after death, increasing faith/religious connections, reviewing your own priorities goals and beliefs, abandoning spiritual practices, taking up new spiritual practices.

### **What gets in the way of healthy grieving?**

Getting stuck in one phase or feeling. Not wanting to appear weak. Believing in the myth that you should be able to just get over it. Societal attitudes. Well-meaning others who say unhelpful things. Not letting yourself cry. Not acknowledging certain thoughts or feelings. Not allowing yourself to go through the process. Trying to be tough or strong for others and thereby denying your own needs. Drug and alcohol misuse. Unresolved past grief.

Unresolved past grief – deaths, moves, divorces, cultural losses, etc.

***Courtesy Prince George Hospice***