

What Does Grief Feel Like?

Following a death or loss, you may feel empty and numb, as if you are in shock. You may notice physical changes such as trembling, nausea, trouble breathing, muscle weakness, dry mouth, or trouble sleeping and eating.

Feelings of deep sadness and sorrow are common in grief. These and other feelings and thoughts are common. Often, people find themselves engaging in behaviors that are different or unusual, or thinking in ways that are unfamiliar and disturbing. Finding their beliefs challenged in grief, many people experience a kind of “spiritual crisis” following loss.

You may become angry - at a situation, a particular person, or just angry in general. Guilt is a common response which may be easier to accept and overcome by looking at the experience in terms of “regret.” When we think “I regret I was not in the room when he died” or “I regret I was not able to speak more openly about dying” it is less critical than “I feel guilty about my behavior.”

People in grief may have strange or disturbing dreams, be absent-minded, withdraw socially, or lack the desire to participate in activities that used to be enjoyable. While these feelings and behaviors are normal during grief, they will pass.

In general, grief makes room for a lot of thoughts, behaviors, feelings and beliefs that might be considered abnormal or unusual at other times. Following significant loss, however, most of these components of grief are, in fact, quite normal.