

live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at M3.

Mental Health: Grief

Grieving is a normal part of life, but can become unhealthy if it overtakes everything else.

Grieving Triggers

Grief is a reaction to a major loss. It is most often an unhappy and painful emotion triggered by the death of a loved one, but can occur after the death of a cherished pet, the loss of a job or the end of a relationship. People can also experience grief if they have an illness for which there is no cure, or a chronic condition that affects their quality of life.

Responding to Grief

Everyone feels grief in their own way, but there are certain stages to the process of mourning. It starts with recognizing a loss and continues until a person eventually accepts that loss. Responses to grief will vary depending upon the circumstances of the death or loss. For example, if the person who died had a chronic illness, the death may have been expected; the end of that person's suffering might even come as a relief. However, if the death was sudden, accidental or violent, coming to the stage of acceptance could take longer.

Stages and Symptoms

According to the National Institutes of Health, there are five stages of grief. These reactions might not occur in a specific

order, and some of them may occur together. Not everyone experiences all of these emotions.

- 1) Denial, disbelief, numbness
- 2) Anger, blaming others
- 3) Bargaining (for instance, "If I am cured, I will never eat fast food again.")
- 4) Depressed mood, sadness, crying
- 5) Acceptance, coming to terms

People who are grieving will often report crying spells, trouble sleeping and lack of productivity at work. Symptoms that last for a while may lead to clinical depression.

Treatment

Family and friends can offer emotional support during the grieving process, but it might be appropriate to seek help from clergy, social workers, mental health specialists or self-help groups. The acute phase of grief may last up to two months, but some milder symptoms can possibly last a year or longer.

Psychological counseling is necessary for anyone who:

- Is unable to face the loss (characterized by an absence of any emotion)
- Is using excessive amounts of drugs and/or alcohol
- Has extreme depression associated with grieving

Grief should never be avoided because it is a healthy response to a loss. Instead, it should be respected, and those who are grieving should have support to help them through the process.

To get help for grief, contact:

Helpguide

www.helpguide.org

Online Grief Support

www.onlinegriefsupport.com

GriefNet

www.griefnet.org

Did You Know...?

Indicators of depression include: a sad or "empty" mood that will not disappear; a loss of interest in things once enjoyed; feeling guilty, worthless or hopeless; changes in sleeping or eating patterns; low energy and fatigue; and thoughts of suicide. Contact a mental health professional if you or a loved one is experiencing these symptoms.