

Are Your Grief Symptoms Unhealthy?

Grief is a paradoxical experience. In other words, it is when you feel most unhealthy that you are probably fine. However, if you feel fine a lot of the time, it could mean that your grief is being kept inside. This means that it will most likely come out in a distorted form down the road. When your grief becomes unhealthy it can be very scary and even affect your physical or psychological health.

By answering the questionnaire "Are your grief symptoms unhealthy?", you will be able to assess how you are doing.

ABSENT GRIEF

With absent grief, you don't really feel that different than before your loss. Yes, there are times when you feel on the verge of getting upset, but you stop your feelings before they occur. You try to avoid feeling sadness even when you are by yourself. For a while, it may seem that you are doing fine; yet, all you have done is drive the grief reactions underground. This method of dealing with grief will eventually wind up affecting your health since the build-up of stress is immense.

What to do: Try to open up a little on your own or with a friend. Try not to let the pain scare you. It will pass if you let it out by talking or writing. Activities such as taking long walks can help as well.

DELAYED GRIEF

At the time of your loss you were very busy - and you may not have slowed down since. Other times you have found yourself simply "crashing" and sleeping for long periods before getting up and going again non-stop. You may have had a few sad moments and thought you were over your loss. Then out of nowhere you may experience a very strong "wave of grief" come over you where you feel intense feelings of sadness or anger or other emotions. You may have been shocked at the intensity of your upset, since you thought you were doing so well.

What to do: Slow down and allow yourself to feel upset from time to time. Keeping busy can be good but it can also be a way of avoiding the hurt that comes with such a loss.

PROLONGED GRIEF

It has been over a year since your loss; and, yet too often, you are still feeling very upset. At times, you feel scared or overwhelmed because you feel like your grief is getting worse. Most likely, you have not let go of the person who died or left, and there are some things you wish you would have said to them.

What to do: Write the lost person a letter and say all the things you did not get a chance to share while they were around. Try to let out both your positive and negative feelings as well. Try to forgive them for what they did to hurt you and forgive yourself for any harm you may have done to them. Then, try to think of something symbolic to let them go - for example, read the letter at a gravesite and then burn it.

Are Your Grief Symptoms Unhealthy?

EXAGGERATED ("STUCK") GRIEF

The normal flow of grief is like a roller coaster ride with lots of ups and downs. If you are not experiencing this variety of emotion, your grief may be "stuck." In other words, you find yourself feeling one emotion, such as anger or depression, frequently or almost exclusively. This could happen because you are not used to sharing your feelings openly. In this case, you simply need to learn to open up. Another possibility is that you have unfinished business, as described above under "prolonged" grief.

What to do: Allow yourself to open up more and see if you get some variety in your feelings. Think about unfinished business with the lost person and consider writing them a letter.

Remember that help through the EAP is at no charge to you and is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. For assistance you might want to call the EAP:

Hillsborough County: (813) 870-0392
Pinellas County: (727) 576-5164
Out of area: (800) 343-4670