

# DELAWARE<sup>®</sup> HOSPICE

*Since 1982*

## Your Loss, Your Grief

What can I do? Where do I start?



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## *A Message from your Bereavement Care Team at Delaware Hospice*

We know that loss brings changes to who we are, who we have been, and who we will come to be. Someone precious, someone irreplaceable is gone from our sight. We have to change because our life will be forever different. Our changes can lead to finding our way to a life with new meaning and purpose.

Loss starts a journey through a process of grief and mourning. We will have many thoughts, feelings, and experiences that are part of a design to bring us into a life of renewed meaning. The circumstances that surround our loss will have a big impact on what our grief journey is like. We have a different experience each time we have a loss, because each person who dies has had a special relationship with us.

There are known reactions and experiences grief brings us. This we do know. We can learn about what grief is like, come to understand the ways it can affect us, and learn ways to manage it and recover from it. We can learn to grow ourselves through grief, not get over it, but get through it. Not to let go and move on, but to remember, reflect, choose, and move forward. The way out is through it, and there are ways to get through grief with less hardship and suffering than you might think possible.

We are here to help you, to be with you. Use this booklet as resource to assist you on your journey. Please make notes in it to share with others, or keep to yourself. We may contact you or you can call us for additional support during this time.

Sincerely,

**Your Bereavement Care Team at  
Delaware Hospice**



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Life is a constant series of greetings and farewells: to good people, to beautiful places, and to wonderful experiences. In every arrival there is a leaving and in every greeting a farewell. This process of farewell we call grief.

Grief is an active process that engages us physically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually. It is a natural and unavoidable response to loss. It is a cluster of ordinary emotions including sadness, fear, anger, doubt, guilt, loneliness, anxiety, despair, and even relief. The intensity of these feelings depends on the intensity of the loss we have experienced. We do not grieve what we do not love. When we lose a loved one, it may feel as though everything around us changes. We may feel isolated, chaotic, and confused. Grief is the process of “relearning the world” after a loss. If allowed to take its natural course, grief always moves us toward healing.



It is important to remember that you will heal. It is important to know that the intensity and rawness will diminish with time, and that hope will always be with you on this journey.

In the early days of grief, we may experience shock and numbness. We may go through our days in a robotic state almost as if we are on “automatic pilot.” Confusion, forgetfulness, and poor concentration are common during this time. Our sleep and our appetites may also be disrupted.

As time goes by, typically a few months after the death, the reality of the loss begins to sink in. We may start to feel deeper and more painful feelings: intense sadness, fear, guilt,



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anger. We may be haunted by “if only,” “whys,” and an awareness that it seems like everything in our life has changed and everything in our lives is out of balance. Nothing seems to help our pain. We may feel powerless, helpless, and out of control. Remember these feelings change and are most often temporary.



Recovery is a slow process of healing which takes much energy and leaves us at times depleted and exhausted. Like physical wounds, emotions do not heal without time and attention. We do not forget, but we do recover. We do heal, and the pain lessens with time.

*Grief is unique as each of us is unique and as each of our losses is unique. Recovery from a significant loss moves at a different pace for each of us. Feelings are different for each of us and come at different times.*

**Seek and accept help** from friends, family, clergy, counselors, books, and support groups. Fill your life with positive people and meaningful activities. It is essential that you take care of yourself and attend to your basic needs for exercise, sleep, a healthy diet, and emotional support.

Accept and experience your grief and your feelings. Learn about grief. It is a natural process. Do not judge your thoughts or feelings. Do not be afraid of your tears, they are a path to your healing. They simply mean you are in touch with your feelings.



# Myths and Unrealistic Expectations of Grief

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- All losses are the same; all people grieve the same way.
- It takes two months to get over your grief.
- Grief always declines in time, in a steadily decreasing fashion.
- When grief is resolved, it never reappears.
- Family members will always help mourners.
- It is better to put painful things out of your mind.
- You should not think about your deceased loved one at anniversaries or holidays because it will make you too sad.
- Bereaved people need only express their feelings and they will resolve their grief.
- Expressing intense feelings is the same as losing control.
- There is no reason to be angry with people who tried to do their best for your loved one.
- There is no reason to be angry with your deceased loved one; you should feel only sadness.
- Only sick individuals have physical problems in grief.
- Because you feel crazy, you are going crazy.
- Rituals and funerals are unimportant in helping us deal with life and death in contemporary America.
- You will be the same after death as before your loved one died.
- You will have no relationship with your loved one after their death.
- The intensity and length of your grief are testimony to your love for him/her.
- There is something wrong if you do not always feel close to your friends and family, since you should be happy they are still alive.



Some unrealistic expectations I may have are...

Unrealistic expectations others have of me are...



# Normal Reactions in Grief

**While grief is a normal response to loss,** it sometimes produces unusual reactions that can be alarming. Every person will grieve in his or her own unique way, but if some of these descriptions fit you, do not worry: you are behaving in a manner that is typical of grief, and you are normal. Not all of these behaviors are healthy, and some may need to be changed, but they are understandable and do not indicate “insanity.”

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## You may be:

- Angry and unable to find consolation in your faith.
- Angry at medical personnel for not doing enough or not having the technical ability to save your loved one.
- Angry at yourself for not properly interpreting warning signs, statements, etc.
- Angry at the deceased for not taking better care of himself/herself; leaving you alone; not making proper financial/legal preparations; dying.
- Unable to sleep without medication, or sleeping all the time.
- Having a change in eating habits with significant weight gain or loss.
- More susceptible to colds, flu, and other physical ailments.
- Unable to motivate yourself to do the things you need to do.
- Unable to concentrate and/or remember things.
- Much more irritable than usual.
- Experiencing unpredictable, uncontrollable bouts of crying.
- Fearful of being alone or with people; afraid to leave the house; afraid to stay in the house; afraid to sleep in a bed.
- Wanting to “punish” something or someone for your pain.
- Angry that no one seems to understand what has happened to you; angry that people expect you to “get on with your life”; angry that you are not given the time you need to grieve.

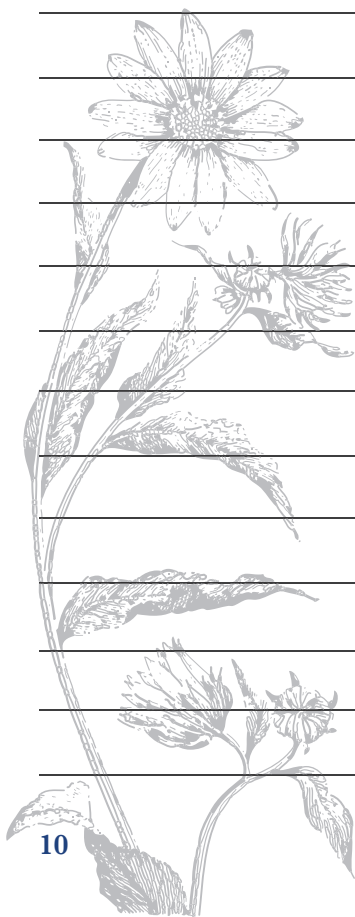
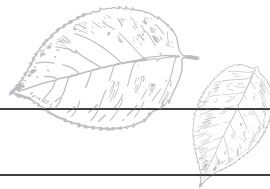
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- Feeling frustration that friends call too much, or not enough; do not invite you out anymore, seem to be pushing you into socializing before you are ready.
  - Feeling guilty over little relationship issues which would not usually be a problem.
  - Experiencing panic/anxiety attacks.
  - Wanting to talk about the deceased, but are fearful of “burdening” friends or family.
  - Wearing clothing, jewelry, or personal items of the deceased.
  - Feeling the loneliness and “aloneness” are more than you can tolerate.
  - Noticing an increase in the use of alcohol, prescription drugs, or street drugs to help you cope.
  - Driving the car too fast and recklessly.
  - Wanting to sell the house and move; wanting to give away all the possessions of the deceased; turning a portion of the home into a shrine (i.e. not changing anything in the room after the death, etc.)
  - Noticing a decrease or increase in sex drive.
  - Going out “looking for a fight.”
  - Screaming for no particular reason.
  - Angry that people can still laugh, that the world goes on, that holidays are not canceled, that you seem so alone in your grief.
  - Feeling a desire to be with people who did not know the deceased, thereby giving you the opportunity to share memories with unbiased listeners.

*By L. Theresa McIntire, CS7, RN, MS*





My reactions to this loss include...



# What Can I Expect on the Grief Journey?

The following is a list of expectations that you may have in grief. Evaluate yourself on each one and see if you are maintaining realistic expectations for yourself:

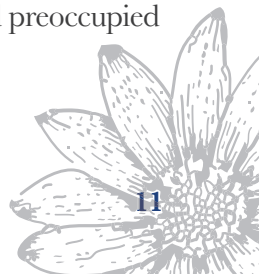
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## You can expect that your grief may:

- Take longer than most people think.
- Take more energy than you would have ever imagined.
- Involve many changes and be continually developing.
- Show itself in all spheres of your life: psychological, social, physical, spiritual, and emotional.
- Depend upon how you perceive the loss.
- Involve a wide variety of feelings and reactions, not solely those that are generally thought of as grief, such as depression and sadness.
- Include grieving not only for the actual person you lost but also for all of the hopes, dreams, and unfulfilled expectations you held for and with that person, and for the needs that will go unmet because of the death.

You may:

- Grieve for many things, other losses, not just the death alone.
- Have some identity confusion as a result of this major loss.
- Have trouble thinking (memory, organization and intellectual processing).
- The loss may resurrect old issues, feelings, and unresolved conflicts from the past.
- Have a combination of many different feelings at one time, such as anger, sadness, relief, and fear.
- Feel some guilt, irritability, frustration, annoyance or intolerance, or at least some manifestations of these emotions.
- Have ambivalence regarding your present or future.
- Experience lowered self-esteem, lack of confidence, or difficulty making decisions.
- Experience grief spasms—acute upsurges of grief that occur suddenly with no warning.
- Feel like you are going crazy.
- Be obsessed with the death and preoccupied with the deceased.



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- Begin a search for meaning and may question your religion and/or philosophy of life.
  - Find yourself acting socially in ways that are different from before.
  - Find yourself having a number of physical reactions.
  - Find that there are certain dates, events, and stimuli that bring upsurges in grief.



In general, most people underestimate the length and severity of their bereavement. Our expectations tend to be too unrealistic, and more often than not, we receive insufficient assistance from friends and society. Your grief may not only be more intense than you expected, but it may also be manifested in more areas and ways than you ever anticipated. You can expect to see brief upsurges of it at anniversary or holiday times, and in response to certain stimuli that remind you of what you have lost. Certain experiences later in life may resurrect intense grief for you temporarily. Society may have unrealistic expectations about your mourning and may not meet your expectations. Your grief may be very different from others and dependent upon the meaning of your loss, your own personal characteristics, and the type of death, your social support, and your physical state.

*From Grieving: How to go on Living When Someone You Love Dies, Therese A. Rando, Ph.D.*

*Adapted by Delaware Hospice, Inc.*

On my grief journey, I can expect that I will likely...





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I seem to be falling apart.  
My attention span can be measured in seconds,  
My patience in minutes.  
I cry at the drop of a hat.  
I forget things constantly.  
The morning toast burns daily.  
I forget to sign the checks.

Half of everything in the house is misplaced.  
Anxiety and restlessness are my constant companions.  
Rainy days seem extra dreary.  
Summer days seem an outrage.

Other people's pain and frustration seem insignificant.  
Laughing, happy people seem out of place in my world.  
It has become routine to feel half-crazy.  
I am normal, I am told.

I am a newly grieving person.

*By Eloise Cole*

# Possible Manifestations of Grief

Stages	Shock	Protest	Disorganization	Reorganization
Thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slowed and/or disorganized thinking</li> <li>• Blocking</li> <li>• Suicidal thoughts</li> <li>• Wishing to join deceased</li> <li>• Seeming unaffected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preoccupation with thoughts of deceased</li> <li>• Searching</li> <li>• Rumination</li> <li>• Dreams of deceased</li> <li>• Misperceiving stimuli to imagine deceased</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Aimlessness</li> <li>• Slowed thinking</li> <li>• Loss of interest</li> <li>• Lowered self-esteem</li> <li>• Focus on memories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More prone to accidents</li> <li>• Realistic memory of deceased is developed</li> <li>• Pleasure at remembering experiences with deceased</li> <li>• Return to previous level of functioning</li> </ul>
Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical numbness</li> <li>• Blunting</li> <li>• Outbursts</li> <li>• Euphoria</li> <li>• Hysteria</li> <li>• Unaffected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Relief</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Guilt</li> <li>• Yearning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sadness</li> <li>• Loneliness</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Meaninglessness</li> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Feeling of unreality</li> <li>• Intense anguish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both sadness and happiness experienced</li> </ul>
Physical Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical numbness</li> <li>• Feeling of unreality</li> <li>• Feeling of being outside of body</li> <li>• Hypo-activity</li> <li>• Hyperactivity</li> <li>• Talkativeness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical distress</li> <li>• Chest pains</li> <li>• Sleep disturbance</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Changes in appetite: more/less</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight change</li> <li>• Decreased felt inside self</li> <li>• Decreased traits and mannerisms adopted</li> <li>• Restlessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased resistance to illness</li> <li>• Return to previous level of physical functioning</li> </ul>
Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passivity in relation to others</li> <li>• Lack of awareness of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence</li> <li>• Seeking help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawn</li> <li>• Avoid others</li> <li>• Lack of initiative</li> <li>• Lack of interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or renewed relationships</li> <li>• New or renewed interests</li> </ul>
Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denial</li> <li>• Intellectualization</li> <li>• Depersonalization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regression to earlier patterns</li> <li>• Projecting anger inward toward oneself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regression to earlier patterns</li> <li>• Projections</li> <li>• Introjection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Former coping mechanisms resumed and/or new ones added</li> </ul>
Spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questioning God's existence and/or motives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving away/against God</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambivalence toward God</li> <li>• Question religious/spiritual practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing hope, comfort and strength</li> </ul>

*Categories are not as sharp and distinct as this chart suggests. Stages, time periods, and manifestations vary greatly among individuals.  
Compiled by Patricia Baker, GEI. Revised by ASD and ISD, Grief Education Institute, Englewood, CO*

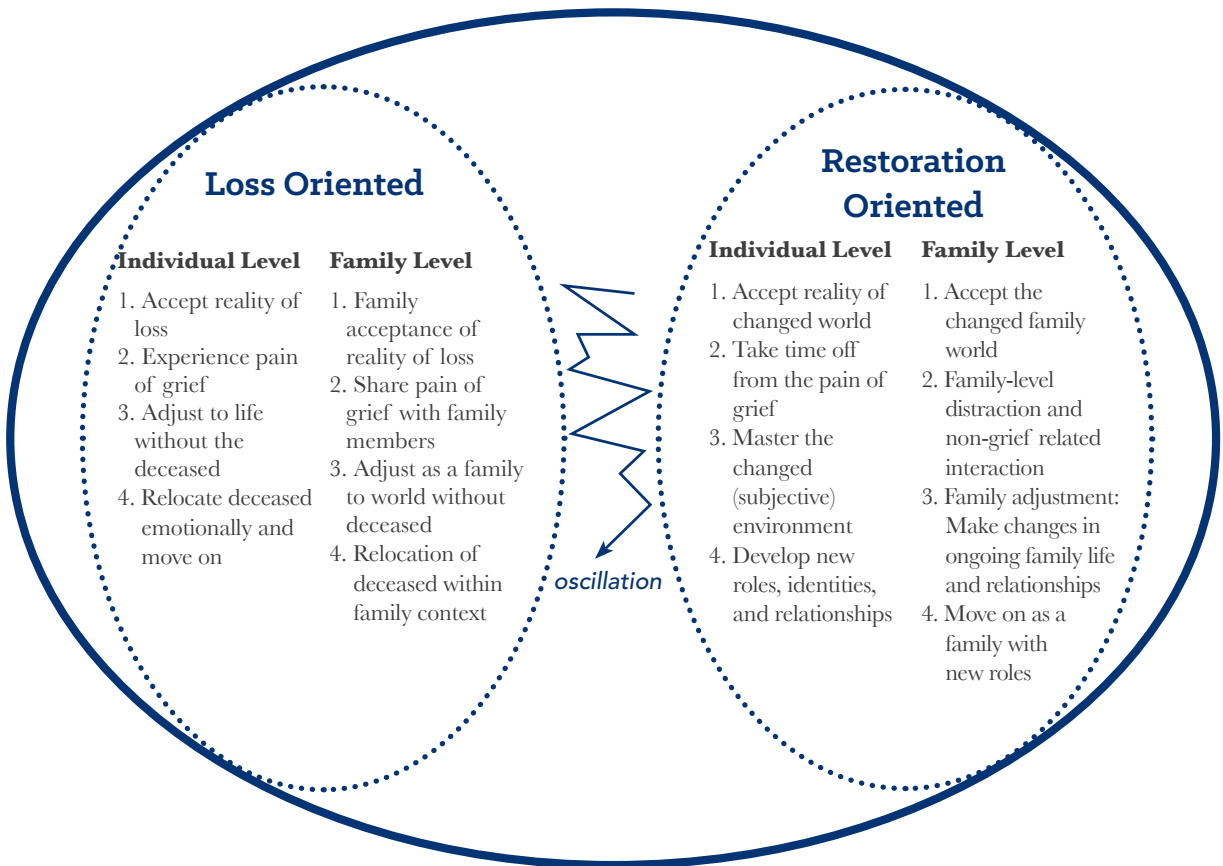
# Worden's Tasks of Mourning

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# Dual Process Model—Revised (DPM-R)

## Individual- and Family-Level Coping





# If you are in a crisis

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**If at any point you have thoughts of harming yourself in any way, it is important that you reach out.**

Help is available. Please call ...

**If you struggle with the intent to self-harm CALL 911**

National Suicide Hot Line: 800-273-8255

Delaware Help Line: 800-464-4357

Northern Delaware Crisis Unit: 800-652-2929

Southern Delaware Crisis Unit: 800-345-6785

Delaware County, PA Mobile Crisis Unit: 855-889-7827

Chester County, PA Mobile Crisis Unit: 877-918-2100

**Your local Delaware Hospice office:**

Newark: 302-478-5707

Dover: 302-678-4444

Milford: 302-856-7717

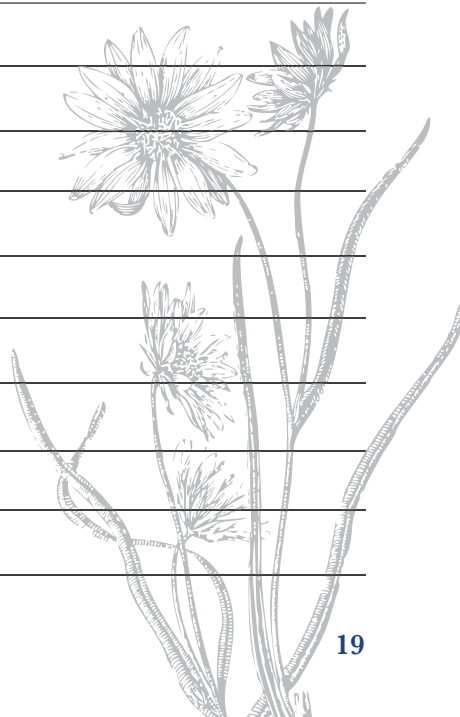
Pennsylvania: 484-259-0017

**Your life is valuable.**

**800-838-9800 | [delawarehospice.org](https://delawarehospice.org)**



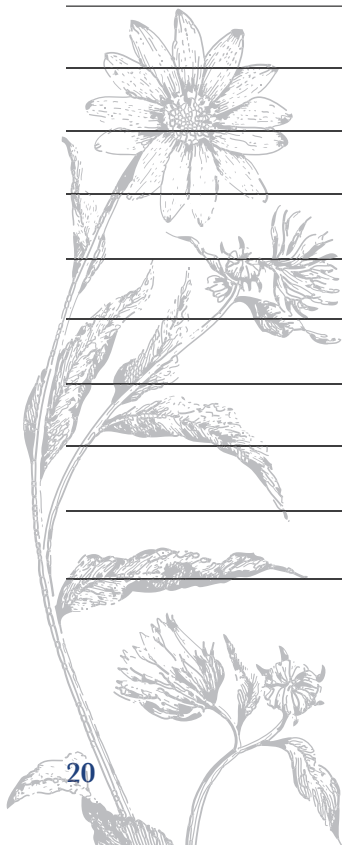
People and phone numbers I can contact for support ...




Ways I can remember and honor my loved one...

"What we have once loved we can never lose."

— **Helen Keller**



I can be kind to myself by...



## — Buddha

Other thoughts and feelings...





# DELAWARE<sup>®</sup> HOSPICE

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*Since 1982*

## **New Castle County**

16 Polly Drummond Center, 2nd Fl.  
Polly Drummond Shopping Center  
Newark, DE 19711  
302-478-5707

## **Kent County**

911 S. DuPont Highway  
Dover, DE 19901  
302-678-4444

## **Sussex County**

Delaware Hospice Center  
100 Patriots Way  
Milford, DE 19963  
302-856-7717

## **Pennsylvania**

1786 Wilmington-West Chester Pike  
Suite 200A, Glen Mills, PA 19342  
484-259-0017

[delawarehospice.org](http://delawarehospice.org)