

The First Sixty Days

With the first realization that life has ended for someone we love, a merciful state of shock occurs. Disbelief is often expressed over and over. A feeling of numbness sets in which enables us to cope of various levels and to manage quite well. There is a period of time (usually one to three weeks) when we make decisions, break the news, attend the services, comfort others. Looking back on it we surprise ourselves with our ability to function and to control our emotions. This is due to what is sometimes called our "natural shock-absorber." It's a physiological response of the brain which occurs whenever we're shocked. Strategic substances are released into our system that protect us from feeling the impact of our loss.

Over the next few days, these substances begin to wear off and we find ourselves experiencing the loss more realistically. We may notice that our emotions are nearer to the surface now and that almost any reference to or thought of the deceased evokes tears and sadness. It actually "feels" like our grief is getting worse, but be assured that this is a sign of progress and is a commonly reported grief pattern.

During this time we find that "keeping busy" allows us to feel more in control. Most of us are masters at "busyness" when we learn how it helps to keep painful thoughts at bay. We begin to make conscious choices to focus on anything and everything else. Some become truly frenzied by their need to stay busy, but as the grief process goes forward, that need usually diminishes and is replaced with a more balanced routine.

Loss of concentration seems to be a common complaint of many griever. It's worrisome for an avid reader to suddenly realize he/she cannot retain a single paragraph. It's upsetting for the highly organized person to lose important papers, misplace car keys, or to forget appointments. Many report an inability to perform a simple task. These experiences prompt people to fear a nervous breakdown or a degenerative disease. Be assured, the loss of concentration is a very real part of the experience of grief and you will return to your normal level of forgetfulness as time goes by.

If you hear your loved one's voice or believe that you caught a brief glimpse of them sitting in their favorite chair, don't be alarmed. Out of habit we "see" and "hear" what is familiar to us. We long for physical signs of the deceased and our subconscious is able to produce split second replays from memory.

Eating and sleeping patterns may vary widely during the first months of bereavement. Some may find it almost impossible to get food down, some begin to overeat. Many become insomniacs while others want to sleep the day away. Behaviors that make the normalcy of our lives often become erratic until adequate adjustment can be made.

Getting used to the major changes in one's life after the death of someone we love can at times seem truly overwhelming. Learning all we can about grief so that these experiences can be less frightening is the most positive step we can take toward healing. For many people a Grief Support Group is an important part of their healing journey. Please feel free to contact the staff at Jones Funeral Home about groups provided in this community.