



Depression and Grief

Depression is an emotional state associated with loss. It includes feelings of sadness, apathy, hopelessness, pessimism and discouragement. When depressed, many people withdraw from others and activities. They may also experience decreased interest in work, family responsibilities and relationships.

Many depressed people wonder if they will ever look forward to things again. Often they may feel okay one day, but then have a few days that are filled with pain and gloom. Longer and more frequent crying spells can occur. Physical discomfort may be present, such as aches, pains, and fatigue. Sleep and eating disturbances are also common. The loss of capacity for pleasure and avoidance of activities you previously enjoyed add to your feelings of isolation and loneliness.

It is normal to want time alone for awhile to sort out your feelings and thoughts. However, prolonged withdrawal and lack of interest are possible signs of a deeper problem.

As with symptoms of grief, the degree of depression and style of coping will differ among the bereaved. Mild to moderate depression is normal after someone dies. However, if symptoms are severe and prolonged, professional support can help. The key symptoms of clinical depression are feelings of pervasive sadness, hopelessness, helplessness and decreased self-esteem that last for longer than two weeks or preoccupation with thoughts of suicide.

A clinically depressed person lives in a world with little emotional satisfaction either in self, in activities or in other persons. Clinical depression can be immobilizing and threatening to your life. If you experience these symptoms, it is important to discuss them with your physician, spiritual advisor, counselor, or friend/family member who can get you the help you need. With counseling and medication, clinical depression can be controlled.

Suggestions for Coping with Depression

- Recognize the symptoms of depression. It is better to deal with the symptoms and work through them rather than to avoid them.
- Talk things over with an understanding friend or loved one. Talking to someone you trust helps to alleviate some of the symptoms of depression. Consider counseling if your friends and family have not been understanding of your experience.
- Write down a daily plan of action, from rising to bedtime, including small manageable goals and pleasant activities.
- Take a break for a favorite activity such as an evening out or a trip.
- Move your body to help work off bottled-up tension. Practice deep breathing, meditation or yoga to help stimulate physical energy.
- Allow yourself to experience the many feelings and emotions that may come over you (such as anger, guilt, etc.).
- Express your feelings through constructive channels. If you're angry, try hitting a pillow or a punching bag, screaming, crying, etc.
- Become involved with volunteer work or support groups to increase social engagement.
- Avoid extra stress or life changing decisions if possible, unless they are financially or medically necessary.
- Remember that good nutrition has a significant impact on mental health. Nourish your body and you will nourish your mind.
- When faced with overwhelming or complicated tasks, break them into small steps and set manageable goals.
- Seek professional help if you feel stuck or your life has become preoccupied with your grief.
- See a physician for a complete checkup and discussion of symptoms.



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- **Learn more about grief and loss**
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 - Groups meet monthly and are facilitated by licensed grief professionals.
 - Registration is required.

**Call (716) 836-6460 or email
griefsupport@palliativecare.org for
more information, or to register.**

**For additional information and
helpful resources, visit our website
at WilsonSupportCenter.org**