

The Nature of Grief and Grieving

Grief is the normal and healthy emotional response to loss. It occurs regardless of whether death is the result of a sudden accident or a prolonged illness. Grief can be associated with many different kinds of loss. According to John W. James and Russell Friedman, grief recovery experts and authors of *THE GRIEF RECOVERY HANDBOOK*, 'Grief incorporates the conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar pattern of behavior and is represented by many different kinds of loss. For example, we may grieve the loss of a beloved human family member, friend, or colleague. We may also grieve the loss of a beloved and admired public figure. We may also grieve the losses resulting from the death of a spouse, or divorce or separation. The loss of a pet, marriage, graduation, retirement, empty nest, graduating from high school or college, moving, major health changes, financial changes (positive or negative), holidays, the end of addiction, loss of trust or faith in people or God, loss of safety, loss of control of one's body may also result in our experiencing grief.'

Although grief is the normal and natural, way of responding to loss it is at the same time, one of the most powerful emotions and one of the most neglected and misunderstood experiences. Generally, although on a certain level we come to expect grief and loss as inevitable aspects of life experience, we know little about and are ill-prepared to deal with (let alone) recover from grief

The subject of grief is often painful, difficult, uncomfortable and unpalatable, and we often find it difficult to discuss – regardless of the nature of our loss but especially if we are grieving the loss of a beloved animal companion. . People who do not know, communicate with and love animals are not able to understand or empathize with the loss of a pet which is a beloved family member for so many of us, Unless they have experienced the loss of a beloved pet, they seem unresponsive to the deep and profound feelings associated with our loss – the void and emptiness, the sadness and depression, the loneliness and despair we feel at the loss of our beloved family member – one so trusting, vulnerable, pure -of heart – one who loves us unconditionally and is loyal and devoted to us – one who is our true loyal and sacred friend, companion and confidant. Perhaps the one who know our hearts and souls better than anyone else.

We are desperately in need of education about grief – the nature of the experience and how to cope with and recover from it. There are many tools that can be helpful to us on our road to understanding loss and grief, as both are inevitable facets of our life experience. First and foremost, it is imperative to identify and recognize that we are grieving and that this grief is normal. Secondly, it is important to express our feelings verbally and in writing Sharing our genuine emotions with sympathetic and empathetic people are important steps to help you on your road to recovery. The process of recovery

requires that we deal with loss directly and acquiring skills that we should have learned as children. You are the only person that can transmute pain into creative hurt. Grief can be transformational and help us grow in wisdom and compassion. It also affords us the opportunity to grow and evolve spiritually .It is truly a journey and leads us from one stage of our lives to the next...