

GRIEF REACTIONS

ANGER – desire to blame someone: downward spiral which uses a lot of energy; internal “simmering”; irritability; bitterness.

Characterized by: reliving of long-past situations that generated anger; verbally attacking people over insignificant issues; blocking out positive feelings; actively fighting opportunities for joy.

Caution: suppressing anger can make you feel like you’re going crazy

APATHY – Faded interest in life which may result when fearing something that seems totally negative and overwhelming.

Characterized by: disconnecting from your situation and normal activities; telling yourself; “you no longer care, there’s no use, there’s nothing you can do about your situation” snapping at others who try to help. *Caution:* this may seem like an easier way out than sorting through and expressing complex feelings and thoughts.

DISAPPOINTMENT, FRUSTRATION – evolve from unmet expectations and anticipations, *Characterized by:* looking to the future instead of focusing on the present; pretending that everything is all right while feeling just the opposite; fearing being hurt again. *Caution;* a belief that only your loved one’s return can fix things, and setting unrealistic goals perpetuates a vicious cycle.

WHAT TO DO

Talk with someone who can be trusted to keep conversations confidential. A professional counselor or a support group can serve this purpose. Ask if being angry is helping. If not, replace it with a more positive feeling, like love – this is difficult, but important! Listen to music and audiotapes that bring peacefulness and relaxation. Use anger as energy to spur activity. Research. Volunteer. Learn a new hobby. Exercise. Construct. Dance. Paint. Do anything that will rechannel thoughts into something constructive.

Open yourself to feelings which have been buried; build a supportive environment; think about those who care about you – closing them out hurts you both; reward yourself for small steps to rid yourself of this; crying is better than avoidance; be aware of what you gain from this state (for example, not having to make tough decisions) and seek more positive ways to deal with these issues. Become involved.

Choose goals carefully – neither selling yourself short nor setting impossible ones; talk to a trusted listener who can lend a realistic, semi-detached view; give yourself credit for all accomplishments; practice relaxation and meditation. Focus on letting go of these feelings and on building new expectations.