

# Grief reminders and what to do with them

## Grief does not just come to an end at a certain point after a loved one's death.

Reminders often bring back the pain of their loss. After the death of your loved one, you might meet with your grief again and again – sometimes even years later. Feelings of grief might return on the anniversary of your loved one's death, or other special days throughout the year, or for no apparent reason at all. These feelings, are sometimes called a STUG (Sudden Temporary Upsurge of Grief) or reawakened grief. They are a reflection that your loved one's life was important to you. It is important to remember that these are temporary.

## Reminders can be anywhere.

Certain reminders of your loved one might be inevitable, such as a visit to their grave or the anniversary of their death. Also, birthdays, Christmas, holidays or other events you know he or she would have enjoyed. Even memorial celebrations for others can trigger the pain of your own loss.

Reminders also can be connected to sights, sounds and smells – and they can be unexpected. You might suddenly be flooded with emotions when you drive by the restaurant your loved one enjoyed or when you hear their favorite song or smell the perfume they wore.

### What to expect when grief reawakens

It can last for a few minutes to a few days at a time. This is a normal experience and is temporary. During this time, you may experience emotions and reactions similar to those that you first experienced when you lost your loved one, including:

- Anger.
- Anxiety.
- Crying spells.
- Fatigue.
- Lack of energy.
- Guilt.
- Loneliness.
- Pain.
- Sadness.
- Trouble sleeping.

Powerful memories may come up of the feelings and events surrounding your loved one's death. For example, you might remember in great detail where you were and what you were doing when your loved one died.

### Living with reawakened grief. Even years after the loss, you might continue to feel sadness when you are confronted with reminders of your loved one's death. Some things that you can do to live with this include:

**Be prepared.** Knowing that you're likely to experience grief reactions again can help you understand them and even turn them into opportunities for growing your life around your loss. Remember that they are temporary.

**Plan a distraction.** Schedule a gathering or a visit with friends or loved ones during times when you're likely to feel alone or be reminded of your loved one's death.

**Reminisce about your relationship.** Focus on the good things about your relationship with your loved one and the time you had together, rather than the loss. Look at photos of memorable events that included your loved one, draw a picture of the event if you don't have a photo. Write a letter to your loved one or journal about some of your memories. You can add to this journal at any time.

**Connect with others.** Call or visit people who were special to your loved one. Find someone who will encourage you to talk about your loss. Stay connected to your usual supports, such as friends, family members and spiritual leaders. Consider joining a bereavement support group.

**Allow yourself to feel a range of emotions.** It's OK to be sad, to be angry, to feel lost, alone and to miss the presence of your loved one. But also allow yourself to experience joy and happiness.