

Physical Impacts of Grief

Grief impacts us in powerful ways as we experience our loved one's loss. It is natural to think of the emotional impacts of grief after a loss, however, just as important are the physical changes that can occur as we grieve. Physical grief responses vary greatly from individual to individual and can happen at different intensity levels during the grieving process.

Some physical symptoms those grieving may experience include:

Body aches and pains

The emotional pain felt after experiencing a loss can transcend into the physical realm leading to aches and pains throughout the body. Some symptoms include frequent headaches, aches in the joints and limbs as well as general heaviness and muscular pain throughout the body. Some others report chest pain and shortness of breath. These are a few symptoms noted by griever after a loss. It is important to monitor any physical changes and their long-lasting impacts.

Digestive issues

Some individuals experience problems with digestive issues which may be related to changes in diet and increased stress. Digestive issues may include upset stomach, nausea, constipation, and stomach pain to name a few.

Fatigue

General fatigue is a commonly reported symptom after a loss. Grievers may experience a reduction in energy, weakness in the muscles, and flu-like fatigue symptoms. Grieving can leave us feeling physically exhausted.

Changes in sleep pattern

Tied into the symptoms of fatigue are the changes in sleep patterns. Some individuals report sleeping too much while others report sleeping too little. Trouble falling or staying asleep can lead to lack of focus, blood pressure problems, and other issues related to insomnia. Oversleeping can make one feel lethargic and lacking energy. These changes in sleep patterns can intensify other grief symptoms.

Recognizing the physical grief responses is an important step, as it can help you identify areas that need more care and attention. Physical symptoms should be temporary. If any of these symptoms persist over the long term consult your physician.



Some helpful strategies that can help manage physical grief symptoms including:

Exercise

Implementing regular exercise to your daily routine can alleviate some of the physical symptoms experienced by grief. Exercise can include simple strategies such as walking, yoga, or swimming. Implementing any activity that engages your body physically can be very helpful during the grieving process.

Making sure to eat properly and stay hydrated

As previously noted, changes in diet can increase issues with digestion. Maintaining a healthy diet as well as drinking enough water provides the body needed nutrients and decreases the probability of digestive issues.

Seeking support

Apart from speaking with your physician if physical symptoms persist, increasing your support system encourages both physical and emotional healing. Support can mean allowing family and friends to help you out around the home. It can also mean seeking a mental health professional or joining a support group to help process the loss.

For additional resources, visit our website at www.childbereavement.org. To register for our free virtual grief support groups, give us a call at (888) 988-5438 or e-mail intake@childbereavement.org.



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