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Grief is a normal reaction to a significant loss that may cause feelings such as sadness and preoccupation with the loss. Grieving is a process that typically progresses through stages, from becoming aware of the loss, to feeling and expressing grief, eventually ending with adjustment to the loss.

A person can develop feelings of grief over the loss of a job, one's good health, an opportunity, or a beloved person or animal. Grieving can also elicit physical symptoms brought on by the stress of grief and life adjustment, such as problems eating and sleeping, headache, tightness in the throat, or body aches and pains. Grieving usually lasts from 2 to 6 months after a loss, gradually improving with time. But a person may have episodes of grief for up to 2 years following a loss.

Intense grieving can resemble depression. Long-term grief can lead to depression, but in most cases a person who is grieving does not have a major depressive disorder. If symptoms of depression persist without improvement for more than 2 months during a period of grief, the person should call a doctor.

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