

Anticipatory Grief

Caregivers and loved ones alike may begin to feel the effects of loss and grief before a death actually occurs. These are normal reactions to current and future losses. Losses can include those associated with caring for someone with an illness, changes in relationships, and the anticipated loss of a loved one. This anticipatory grief may actually help you prepare for the eventual losses.

Signs & Symptoms of Anticipatory Grief

It is normal to experience combinations of or recurring signs and symptoms of anticipatory grief.

Some of the signs and symptoms include:

- Feelings of guilt
- Tearfulness
- Constant changes in emotions
- Anger
- Depression
- Feeling of emotional numbness
- Anxiety or feelings of fear
- Changes in sleeping and eating habits
- Poor concentration
- Forgetfulness or poor memory
- Loneliness
- Denial
- Acceptance
- Fatigue

What You Can Do

There are things you can do which may be helpful for working through the anticipatory grief process.

Some suggestions are:

- Go for short walks when possible.
- Write in a journal.
- Plan for the future.
- Seek spiritual assistance as needed.
- Talk to someone such as a friend, family member, or clergy.

- Make changes only as needed and put off major decisions when possible.
- Do the things you want to do now. Forget the chores that you can do later.
- Spend time with your loved one, friends, support group, and family.
- Seek help from your family, friends, and/or a hospice volunteer to arrange some time to spend doing the things you enjoy.
- Call your doctor if anticipatory grief feels overwhelming or you want to talk about your feelings.
- Attend a caregiver support group