



HOW TO KNOW IF YOU NEED EXTRA HELP WITH YOUR GRIEF

Grief is painful. And everyone who grieves can use a helping hand and a listening ear. But how do you know if you would benefit from a little extra help, help from an expert in loss and bereavement issues? What clues might indicate you could use some extra care?

Here are ten questions to ask yourself about various aspects of your grief. Any grieving person might experience these briefly, but if you sense them continuing, it's probably time to talk to someone knowledgeable about grieving...if only to reassure yourself that you're on the right path.

1. Are you *always* irritable, annoyed, intolerant or angry these days?
2. Do you experience an *ongoing* sense of numbness or of being isolated from your own self or from others? Do you usually feel that you have no one to talk to about what's happened?
3. Since your loved one died are you *highly* anxious *most* of the time about your own death or the death of someone you love? Is it beginning to interfere with your relationships, your ability to concentrate or live as you would like to live?
4. Do you feel that you are *always* and *continually* preoccupied with your loved one, his or her death or certain aspects of it even though it's been several months since his or her death?
5. Do you *usually* feel restless or in "high gear"? Do you feel the need to be constantly busy...beyond what's normal for you?
6. Are you afraid of becoming close to new people for fear of losing again?
7. Do you find yourself acting in ways that might prove harmful to you over time: drinking more than you used to; using more prescription or non-prescription drugs; engaging in sexual activity that is unsafe or unwise; driving in an unsafe or reckless manner (beyond what's normal for you); or entertaining serious thoughts about suicide?



8. Are you taking on too much responsibility for surviving family members or close friends? (What's too much responsibility? That varies greatly and depends on the situation, but if you're feeling burdened by it, angry or like the situation is "suffocating" you, it might be time to speak to someone.)

9. Do your grief reactions continue, *over time*, to be limited in some way? Are you experiencing only a few of the reactions or emotions that usually come with grief? Are you unable to express your thoughts or feeling about your loved one and his or her death in words or in actions? Do you remember only certain aspects of your loved on or you relationship together, for example, only the good parts as opposed to a more complete and balanced view of him or her?

10. Is there some aspect of what you're experiencing that makes you wonder about whether you're normal or going crazy? Do you feel stuck in your grief in some way, unable to move on, even though it's been quite some time since your loved one's death?

Beyond these ten signs, trust your own judgment. If you think that talking to a professional might help, talk to one or more people to see who you are comfortable with. Take advantage of one who seems helpful to you. After all, grief is painful enough without trying to do it all by yourself.