

# NAVIGATING GRIEF: BODY, MIND, HEART AND SPIRIT

Grief destabilizes our physical bodies, mind, spirit and, of course — our hearts. The range of emotional experiences in grief also affects our bodies, which connects to our minds, and can sometimes change our social circle. You may be experiencing some or all of the common reactions to grief listed below. You may not have felt some of these reactions, and that's OK, too.

## Physical Reactions

- Changing levels of activity
- Difficulty sleeping (or sleeping all the time)
- Headaches, stomach aches
- Chest pain and/or heart palpitations
- Appetite fluctuations and/or nausea

We recommend visiting with your primary care doctor to support physical symptoms of grief.

## Emotional Reactions

- Deep sadness and yearning for your child
- Anger, frustration, irritation
- Sudden grief bursts and 'waves'
- Powerlessness and helplessness
- Loneliness and numbness
- Anxiety, panic attacks
- Guilt and shame
- Mood swings and fluctuations

Some parents may experience a desire to join their child in death rather than continue through the pain of losing a child. Others may turn to substances, such as drugs or alcohol. This is a common, and often frightening, emotional experience for many parents and caregivers.

**If you have thoughts of self-harm, substance misuse and/or suicide, call the 988 mental health crisis lifeline for support or 911 if you're in immediate danger.**

## Social Reactions

- Pulling away from friends or family (isolation)
- Increased sensitivity
- Changes (or disruptions) in social relationships with family, friends or work

Your desire to socialize with your community or other bereaved parents will fluctuate over time. Give yourself grace as your social needs change throughout your grief.

## Spiritual or Existential Reactions

- Dreams, signs or other mystical experiences
- Distress around not having dreams or seeing signs
- Challenges of faith
- Questions such as 'Why me? Why my child?'
- Finding yourself 'looking' for your child

Existential questions and changes in faith (if you are spiritual) are tremendously challenging. While there are no answers for many of these questions, it can feel therapeutic to voice them aloud with a trusted loved one, counselor or member of your faith community.