Grief affects everyone differently, but everyone will have some reaction to grief. Grief affects many aspects of a person’s life. Grief is not just emotional. It affects how a person feels, thinks, behaves—even what they believe. The intensity of grief changes over time and through personal growth. Below are some common grief reactions of adults. Not everyone will experience these reactions, and there may be additional reactions not listed.

**PHYSICAL REACTIONS:**
- Deep sighing
- Feeling weak or faint
- Muscle tension, aches or pains
- Appetite change (increase or decrease)
- Increased blood pressure
- Sleep disturbances (more, less or waking more)
- Fatigue/exhaustion
- Rapid heartbeat
- Weight change
- Decreased resistance to illness
- Indigestion
- Headaches
- Hypersensitivity to sights, sounds, smell, touch
- Dry mouth
- Tightness or heaviness in chest
- Hollow feeling in stomach
- Lump in throat
- Sobbing

**COGNITIVE REACTIONS:**
- Short-term memory loss
- Difficulty concentrating
- Confusion
- Preoccupation with loss/death
- Difficulty making decisions, even simple ones
- Searching to understand
- Disbelief
- Increase/decrease in dreams
- Suicidal thoughts

**EMOTIONAL REACTIONS:**
- Anger
- Sadness
- Depression
- Anxious
- Despair
- Loneliness
- Feeling “out of control”
• Mood swings
• Guilt, including survivor guilt
• Relief
• Numbness
• Hopelessness
• Helplessness
• Fear
• Longing/yearning for loved one
• Bitter
• Calm

**BEHAVIORAL REACTIONS:**
• Forgetfulness
• Blaming others
• Avoidance of people/situations
• Change in activity (increase or decrease)
• Neglecting oneself (hygiene, eating, health care)
• Loss of interest in work, world events, social activities, sex
• Increase in use of alcohol/drugs/medications
• Acting out

**SPIRITUAL REACTIONS:**
• Asking “why” questions
• Anger at God
• Change in beliefs and values
• Loss or strengthening of faith
• Need to find meaning in the loss

*If you or someone you know is grieving, consider taking advantage of the groups, classes or individual support offered through the Journeys program, the bereavement department of Hospice of the Red River Valley. For more information about grief support services, please call (800) 237-4629 and ask for a member of the Journeys department, or visit our website at www.hrrv.org.*