

## **Bereavement and Grief**

### **Phase One: 1<sup>st</sup> day to one week**

*May be characterized by numbing disbelief and outbursts of extreme emotion*

### **Phase Two: 1<sup>st</sup> month to 8<sup>th</sup> month**

*May be characterized by yearning, searching for loved one, restlessness, preoccupation with deceased, crying, misinterpretation (having visions of deceased)*

### **Phase Three: 9 months to 1 ½ years**

*May be characterized by disorganization, despair, acceptance that person is gone, identity crisis (“who am I now?”)*

### **Phase Four: 1 year to 2 years**

*May be characterized by reorganization, “moving on” with new patterns and/or new relationships*

### **Acceptance of death=Final stage of development**

### **Other feelings you may experience during the grieving process:**

1. shock-little memory of details, going on “auto-pilot”
2. emotional release-anger, fear, remorse, loneliness
3. depression-helplessness and hopelessness
4. physical symptoms of distress-sometimes same as deceased; headaches, loss of weight, back problems
5. anxiety-vivid dreams, sense of dread, spiritual crisis
6. hostility-anger, random or specific
7. guilt-real, exaggerated or imaginary
8. healing through memories-both happy and negative
9. acceptance-reality of death and letting go

## **Abnormal Grief**

When does grief become abnormal?

- when feeling emotionally overwhelmed throughout entire grief process
- when your emotional state remains the same throughout entire grief process
- when you begin using alcohol or other substances to cope with grief

-when you are engaged in unhealthy relationships resulting from your grief

**Risk factors for abnormal grief:**

1. Type of death experienced-more violent or unexpected death may be a risk factor for abnormal grief
2. Characteristics of the relationship shared with the deceased
3. Characteristics of you, the survivor (The better your relationship was with the deceased, the easier the grief process should be.)
4. Social factors-ex. lack of support system
5. History of psychiatric disorders

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing what seems to be abnormal grief, seek support. Whole Senior Care can be reached at 610-566-4397.