How grief can show up

Grief affects the whole person: feelings, body, mind and behaviour.

People are often frightened by the strength and variety of what they feel after a loss. All of the following are common.

Feelings

Sadness, yearning, anger, guilt, anxiety, loneliness, relief, numbness. Sometimes several at once. Sometimes none.

Body

Exhaustion, tightness in the chest or throat, a hollow stomach, aches, poor sleep, appetite changes, restlessness, getting ill more easily.

Thinking

Disbelief, confusion, poor memory and concentration, going over and over what happened, "if only".

Behaviour

Crying, or being unable to. Withdrawing, or keeping very busy. Searching for them. Avoiding reminders, or holding on to them.

Sensing them

Hearing their voice, feeling them near, dreaming of them. This is common and usually comforting.

Meaning and faith

Questioning beliefs. Asking "why?" Feeling life is pointless, or seeing what matters more clearly.

Things people rarely say out loud

- "I feel relieved, and I hate myself for it."
- "I am angry with them for leaving."
- "I cannot cry, and I think something is wrong with me."
- "I laughed today and felt terrible."
- "I am jealous of people who still have theirs."

Each of these is a normal part of grief.

Waves

Grief often comes in bursts, set off by a song, a smell, an empty chair, or nothing at all. In the early days the waves are close together. Over time there are longer gaps, though a big one can still knock you over years later.

What I have been noticing in myself

What has surprised me

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