

YOU ARE NOT GOING CRAZY

Although many people who have recently experienced the death of a loved one think they are going crazy, they aren't. Normal grief, sometimes called complicated grief, encompasses many different feelings and behaviors.

The common characteristics of normal grief include:

- Bodily distress of some type
- Preoccupation with the image of the deceased
- Guilt related to the deceased or circumstances of the death
- Hostility
- Inability to function as before the death
- Development of traits of the deceased

Because grief is so painful and often seems overwhelming it can frighten us. Many people wonder if they are grieving in the "right way" and if the feelings they are having are normal. Most people who suffer the loss of a loved one experience one or more of the following:

- Feeling tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest
- Having an empty feeling in their stomach and losing their appetite
- Feeling guilty at times and angry at others
- Feeling restless and looking for activity but finding it difficult to concentrate
- Feeling as though the loss isn't real
- Sensing the loved one's presence, expecting the person to walk in the door the usual time, hearing his/her voice, or seeing his/her face
- Wandering aimlessly and forgetting or not finishing things they've started around the house
- Having difficulty sleeping and dreaming of their loved one frequently
- Assuming mannerisms or traits of their loved one
- Experiencing an intense preoccupation with the life of the deceased
- Feeling as though they need to take care of the people around them by politely not talking about their feelings of loss
- Needing to tell and retell the experience of the loved one's death
- Experiencing mood changes over the slightest things and crying at unexpected times
- Not wanting to go on living
- Feeling tired all the time

From St. Anthony's Hospice
Amarillo, Texas

If you would like to talk with someone at Iowa City Hospice about your grief, please call us at (319) 351-5665 or 1-800-897-3052 or go to our website, www.iowacityhospice.org.