

PATHWAYS CENTER for GRIEF & LOSS

ANTICIPATORY GRIEF AND MOURNING

In caring for a loved one with a serious illness, losses can accumulate over the time. Some are significant and sudden, such as the loss of income when work is no longer an option. Some are anticipated and worrisome, as in the lack of physical help or the companionship that a loved one had always provided. Others may be subtle, such as a caregiver's loss of time alone as other responsibilities increase. Subtle losses may not even be noticeable. Grief responses are accompanied by the need to mourn, express, or work through these losses. This is part of what is termed 'anticipatory grief and mourning.'

Common Signs of Anticipatory Grief Reactions:

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Behavioral</u>	<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>
Difficulty sleeping	Withdrawing	Sadness	Difficulty concentrating
Headaches	Spending more or less time with family member	Guilt	Need for information
Exhaustion		Anxiety	Disbelief
Loss of appetite	Repeatedly talking about how the family member may die	Helplessness	Worry about "what ifs"
Shortness of breath		Anger	
Dizziness	Crying or inability to cry	Yearning	
Aches and pains	Keeping busy	Overwhelmed	
		Self-blame	

These are all **natural** and **normal** grief reactions. Mourning involves recognizing how grief responses affect you individually and then acting on them. Addressing your grief is influenced by your culture and your environment. Communication is critical, as everyone is unique in what they need to do. Consider the following:

- Set aside time for you, to rest and renew
- Tune into your own reactions and needs
- Think about what has helped you at other difficult times in the past
- Set aside your own assumptions and expectations
- Know that emotions may increase in intensity over time
- Find healthy ways to express your feelings as they arise; don't let them accumulate
- Exercise regularly
- Explore ways family members and friends can help
- Consider trying a caregiver's support group

