

PATHWAYS CENTER for GRIEF & LOSS

LOSSES IN LATER LIFE

As you age, there are a variety of significant losses you may experience. Everyone grieves when they lose something or someone they care about. Grief affects you in all ways -- physically, mentally, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

COMMON LOSSES

- **Changes in physical health;** decreased vision, hearing, ability to walk, incontinence, or chronic pain. Often these types of physical changes may affect your interest or ability to participate in social activities.
- **Death** of a spouse, siblings, friends, possibly even children or grandchildren can occur later in life. There is usually more cumulative loss as you live longer. Perhaps you are also grieving your own mortality.
- **Retirement**, whether planned or unplanned, often results in changes in income, social interaction and self-esteem.
- **Financial losses** due to retirement, death of a spouse or partner, or catastrophic illness can be extremely distressing.
- **Change in residence** may result from declining health or finances. This may also mean loss of treasured possessions, a pet, or regular contact with neighbors or family members.
- **Loss of independence**, such as the ability to drive a car, can be a significant loss as you gradually or suddenly-become more dependent on others for help with tasks because of physical or mental changes.

WAYS TO COPE

- **Be gentle** with yourself, try to be less critical.
- **Give yourself permission to mourn** your losses and express the feelings associated with each one.
- **Discover *your* mode of expression or coping.** Talk with someone you trust, try gathering information, writing or journaling, music, involvement in hobbies or other enjoyable activities, prayer or exercise.
- **Consider what was helpful** when you coped with previous losses and life changes.

You have been through many losses and changes, both large and small, throughout your lifetime. Remember you have developed some effective strategies to cope with your losses. Draw upon these strengths, and remember there are many others who care about you and would like to help. Call the Pathways Center for Grief & Loss (717) 391-2413 or (800) 924-7610 if you would like to talk with a bereavement counselor.

