

# Tips for Dealing with Grief

## Due to the Oil Spill Disaster



### How does grief differ from depression?

Depression is more than a feeling of grief after losing someone or something you love. Clinical depression is a whole body disorder. It can take over the way you think and feel. Symptoms of depression include:

- A sad, anxious, or “empty” mood that won’t go away
- Loss of interest in what you used to enjoy
- Low energy, fatigue, feeling “slowed down”
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Loss of appetite, weight loss, or weight gain
- Trouble concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Feelings of hopelessness or gloom
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Thoughts of death or suicide or a suicide attempt
- Recurring aches and pains that don’t respond to treatment

### What is grief?

Grief is the normal response of sorrow, emotion, and confusion that comes from losing someone or something important to you. It is a natural part of life. Grief is a typical reaction to death, divorce, job loss, economic uncertainty, a move away from family and friends, or loss of good health due to illness. Grief can be a normal reaction to the environmental, cultural, and economic losses due to the oil spill disaster in the Gulf Coast.

### How does grief feel?

Just after a death, loss, or change in livelihood, you may feel empty and numb, as if you are in shock. You may notice physical changes such as trembling, nausea, trouble breathing, muscle weakness, dry mouth, anxiety, obsessive thoughts, or trouble sleeping and eating.

You may become angry—at the impact of the oil spill, a particular person, or just everything in general. If someone you know has died, you might have normal feelings of guilt and think, “I could have, I should have, and I wish I would have . . . .”

People in grief may have strange dreams or nightmares, be absent-

minded, withdraw socially, increase their use of addictive substances, or lack the desire to do their typical day-to-day activities. While these feelings and behaviors are normal during grief, they will pass.

### How long does grief last?

Grief lasts as long as it takes you to accept and learn to live with your loss of loved ones or job. For some people, grief lasts a few months. For others, grieving may take years.

The length of time spent grieving is different for each person. There are many reasons for the differences, including personality, health, coping style, culture, family background, and life experiences. The time spent grieving also depends on your relationship with the person who died or your connection to the Gulf Coast culture.

### How will I know when I’m done grieving?

Recovery from grief related to this oil spill disaster may take a long time, and some people might experience the following stages in any particular order:

- Shock and denial
- Anger



## Where can I find help?

### Hotlines

*National Domestic Violence Hotline*  
Toll-Free: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)  
TTY: 1-800-787-3224

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline*  
Toll-Free: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)  
Web Site: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

### Treatment Locator

*SAMHSA Treatment Referral Helpline*  
Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)  
TTY: 1-800-487-4TTY (4889)  
Web Site: <http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment/>

### Information Clearinghouse

*SAMHSA Health Information Network*  
Toll-Free: 1-877-726-4727  
TTY: 1-800-487-4TTY (4889)  
Web Site: <http://www.samhsa.gov/shin>

### Helpful Resources

*SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC)*  
Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515  
E-Mail: [DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:DTAC@samhsa.hhs.gov)  
Web Site: <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/dtac>  
*For specific State referral information, please contact SAMHSA DTAC.*

*The Compassionate Friends (national office)*  
Local: 630-990-0010  
Toll Free: 1- 877-969-0010  
Web Site: <http://www.compassionatefriends.org>  
A national, self-help support organization for those grieving the loss of a child or sibling.

*GriefNet*  
Web Site: <http://www.griefnet.org/>  
A Web site that provides information and resources related to death, dying, bereavement, and major emotional and physical losses.

*Note: Inclusion of a resource in this fact sheet does not imply endorsement by the Center for Mental Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

KEN-01-0104  
Revised 07/2010

- Resistance
- Sadness
- Acceptance

### What if these feelings won't go away?

If you have experienced the death of a friend or loved one, a change in livelihood, or other kinds of loss, feelings of grief are a normal reaction. But if these feelings persist, ask for help.

Contact:

*Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance*  
Toll-Free: 1-800-826-3632  
Web Site: <http://www.dbsalliance.org/site/PageServer?agenname=home&cvridirect=true>

*National Alliance on Mental Illness*  
Local: 703-524-7600  
Toll-Free: 1-800-950-6264  
Web Site: <http://www.nami.org>

*National Institute of Mental Health*  
Local: 301-443-4513  
Toll-Free: 1-866-615-6464  
Web Site: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

*National Mental Health Association*  
Local: 703-684-7722  
Toll-Free: 1-800-969-6642  
Web Site: <http://www.nmha.org>