



Student Health Center

UNC Wilmington

INSTRUCTION SHEET: GRIEF REACTION

The Student Health Provider has treated you today for a grief reaction. The first reaction to the death of a family member is almost always severe, stabbing emotional pain. Many people are overwhelmed by a loss of this magnitude.

After the initial pain, the loss of a loved family member affects people differently: Denial, depression, guilt, anger, fear, anxiety and hopelessness are some of the reactions people have. Physical symptoms are common, as well: Difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, upset stomach, nervousness, fatigue, etc., are often present during the early grieving process.

Realize that the grieving process is natural. Uncomfortable feelings such as those listed above often accompany significant grief. Understand also that these symptoms are *temporary*: After a person gets through the difficult and confining “cocoon” of a grief reaction, he/she can resume the “butterfly” of everyday living.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP THE GRIEVING PROCESS TAKE PLACE:

- 1- Give yourself time. Time is the universal healer of grief.
- 2- Seek the company and support of family, friends, and pastors. Emotional support is important during the initial stages of grief.
- 3- Medication for extreme anxiety or inability to sleep can help treat a severe grief reaction. Medication should be used sparingly, only as needed: Too much medication can blunt the grief reaction, prolonging the grieving process. Again, understand that the uncomfortable feelings accompanying the initial grief reaction are part of a natural process leading back to a stable life.
- 4- A personal/referral provider or counselor can help provide guidance through the grieving process. Make an appointment with your personal/referral provider if your grief reaction continues to be bothersome.
- 5- As time goes on, you may have further questions about the death of your loved one. If so, contact the doctor who cared for him/her. If the doctor is busy, leave a message to return your call.