



Experiencing the Loss of an Elder as a Volunteer or Caregiver

The mourning period is a period that involves “a passage through suffering”. In this passage, there will certainly be sorrow and pain, as well as many other emotions, but also gratitude. And, depending on the context, there may also be relief, a feeling of peace, even a sense of deliverance.

Whether you are a volunteer or a caregiver, you are a significant person in your companion’s life. The grief you experience will depend on the level of attachment, the intensity and the nature of your relationship.

Knowing that a loss can sometimes bring to the surface past bereavements and revive feelings of sorrow, it is also important to be aware of strategies that exist for recovering and finding solace.

Learning more about death and sharing with people who care will help you navigate this passage as serenely as possible.

Little Brothers

The different stages of mourning

Every bereavement is unique. The order and duration of the following eight stages of grief generally vary from person to person. They may be present to varying degrees, but being aware of these stages can be of help and serve as a reference in your own mourning process:

- Shock
- Denial
- Expression of emotions
- Concrete actions
- The search for meaning
- Forgiveness
- Letting go
- Emotional and spiritual legacy

Source: Jean Monbourquette and Isabelle D'Aspremont

Good practices



- Accept your own feelings and emotions;
- Take time for yourself, accept that grief is a process that takes time and that can revive the pain of previous losses;
- Share your grief, share your memories of the person, confide in people you trust;
- Think about what makes you feel better and do not hesitate to ask for help;
- Know that successive bereavements can have a multiple bereavement effect and increase suffering;
- Set aside a specific daily time for mourning and give yourself permission to devote yourself to it;
- Write a journal, tell your story;
- Maintain a routine, stay attuned to your health and well-being, go for a walk, get fresh air regularly;
- Remember that there will come a time when you will feel thankfulness and gratitude for these precious moments;
- Read about mourning and, if necessary, contact a support group or consult a professional.



Attitudes to adopt



- Keep in mind that it is normal to feel sorrow at the loss of a loved one. The first year is the most difficult, all events will be firsts. Be gentle with yourself in these circumstances. Give yourself time.
- You are not alone: your coordinator is available to provide you with support and professional resources.
- As a caregiver, make sure you stay in touch with other caregivers and specialized support networks. You are not alone: talk about what you are going through and how you feel.
- Take care of your own well-being to help you deal with these major transitions.

Things to avoid

- Denying your feelings and the impact of this loss on your life;
- Feeling guilty about being sad;
- Nourishing regrets (I should have, if I had known, we could have...);
- Isolating yourself.

Additional resources

Telephone

Info-santé/Info social : 811

Tel-Écoute/Tel-Aînés : 1 888 LE DEUIL (1888 533 3845)

Readings

BEAUTHÉAC Nadine, *100 réponses aux questions sur le deuil et le chagrin*, Éditions Albin Michel, 2010.

D'ASPREMONT Isabelle et MONBOURQUETTE Jean, *Excusez-moi, je suis en deuil*, Éditeur NOVALIS, 2011.

FAURÉ Christophe, *Vivre le deuil au jour le jour*, Éditions Albin Michel (édition revue et augmentée), 2018.

De MONTIGNY Johanne, *Quand l'épreuve devient vie*, Éditions Médiapaul, 2010.

Online

Fondation Monbourquette, *Les étapes du deuil*, <https://bit.ly/etapes-deuil> (In French only).

Centre de formation Monbourquette, *Comment soutenir un travailleur ou une travailleuse en deuil*, <https://bit.ly/soutenir-travailleur-deuil> (In French only).