

# The Shock Of Loss



**D**eath is a harsh reality to grasp. The loss of a loved one can feel unreal like a disturbing dream you can't wake up from. You may know that a loved one is very ill or in the process of dying, yet the finality of death always feels sudden, shocking, and unbelievable.

At the first shock of loss, experiences and conversations can be blurred or hazy. You may not yet feel any of the deep feelings of grief. People in shock often appear to be behaving normally without a lot of emotion because the news hasn't fully sunk in yet.

Numbness is a natural protection when facing any kind of trauma. Detached from the reality of the loss, you may be able to function pretty well at first. This can be confusing to the people around you, when they expect full-blown grief and suffering that you don't yet feel.

In the days or weeks to come, the intense feelings usually break through this numbness—feelings like sadness, anger, longing, loneliness, guilt, resentment, and regret. When fully immersed in the grieving process, you then may feel flooded with tears and emotions.

Sleep might be difficult immediately following a loss. Staying awake late at night obsessing or falling asleep only to wake suddenly in the middle of the night are both normal reactions. It may be very uncomfortable but you are not crazy.

During the day, tasks or conversations may temporarily cause you to forget your loss until something reminds you. Just being asked, "How are you?" can be a reminder that something terrible has occurred. Even months later, the realization that someone is gone forever can come as an unwanted surprise.

Recognize that shock is a natural part of grief that may occur many times before the actuality of the loss sinks in. Even though it feels off-balance, it is part of the process of dealing with painful experiences. In time, the shock will lessen. Death is hard to accept and it does take time.

Most of all, remember that even though the grieving process is uncomfortable and that loss itself is shocking, it is possible to acknowledge and accept loss. You will remember your lost loved ones forever, but you do not need to grieve their absence forever.

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