



Is this Normal? The Bereaved Parent

Grief affects us on a physical, emotional and spiritual level, and often these elements cannot be separated.

While every loss is unique, these are some of the thoughts and feelings that bereaved parents commonly experience:

- Obsessive thoughts surrounding the death
- A feeling of complete emptiness or hollowness
- The feeling of a stone or weight in the chest
- A feeling of restlessness and being unable to settle
- A pervasive feeling that you have something important to do
- Feeling worthless and a failure for not protecting your child
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling angry with God, yourself, or with your child for leaving you
- Bitterness
- Fear of the future because you know that bad things do happen
- A feeling that life is not worth living, that nothing is important
- A feeling that death would be welcome
- Feeling emotionally unavailable to others
- Feeling disorientated, or as if the ground has been shifted from under your feet
- Feeling drained / yawning
- Feeling unusually energised but not knowing how to use that energy
- Panic attacks and palpitations / breathlessness / dizziness
- Feeling physically cold
- Sleeping a lot or being unable to sleep
- Eating more or being unable to eat / sensation of a lump in the throat
- Aches and pains due to constant physical tension not being released
- Not enjoying physical contact from others
- The sensation of carrying a heavy burden
- A sense of injustice – the world is unfair
- Feeling more spiritual / less spiritual
- Annoyance when other people complain about unimportant things
- Disbelief / Despair
- A feeling that your arms are empty
- The feeling that 'signs' are everywhere and that everything is supernaturally important
- Wanting to campaign to stop other children dying from the same cause
- Waking up feeling OK and then remembering with a sudden shock what has happened
- Constant sense of 'absence of presence' / 'searching' for deceased
- Acting as if person is still alive eg. setting a place at table for them

Remember, there is no right or wrong way to grieve, so not everybody will react in the same way. However, if you are having these thoughts and feelings, you are not alone.