

## An Adult's Perspective

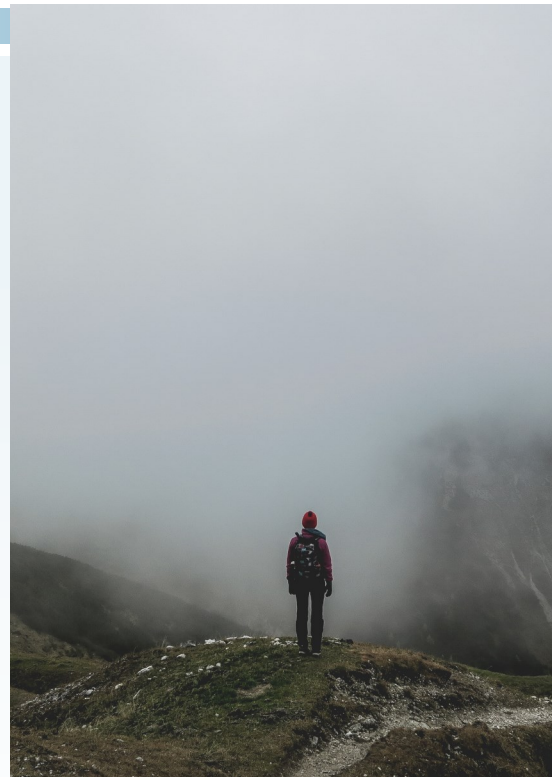
Adults learn “proper” and “acceptable” forms of mourning. The fears and concerns that arise when an adult's parent dies are different from a child's, but the grief is no less intense. Most adults know that they can physically survive without their parents, but the emotional ties are still strong. The adult may have a greater appreciation of the parent's role in his/her life, and the sacrifices that were made raising them.

Since most adults lead lives with some independence from their parents, the focus of grieving shifts. Adults may not wonder who will care for them; rather, a parent's death may stimulate more introspective concerns. The adults may grieve their parent's death in the sense of passage of time. There may be a feeling of a loss of rootedness; an important link to the past is now gone. The adult may question his/her place in life, realizing that death is inevitable. As adults grow and appreciate their parents, there is an added element of losing a dear friend. The feelings and emotions associated with the grief of a parent's death can be quite numbing and devastating. This is true in spite of the fact that most often some anticipatory grief will take place.

Anticipatory grief is the ability to mourn the expectation of death. In other words, an adult realizes that his/her parents will not live forever. As the adults parents grow older, that adult begins to grieve gradually as the problems of aging begin to surface. It is important to note that at the point of death, the shock and disbelief are just as evident as in an unexpected death.

Adult concerns may center around the loss of the parent as the focal point of the family. The adult family must deal with “keeping the family together,” a role so often attributed to the parents. The adult will be aware of role changes within the family structure. These changes must be monitored and encouraged, as this shifting is necessary to maintain the family stability. If grandchildren are involved, special attention and sharing of grief must be promoted as well.

To summarize, the death of a parent is difficult and challenging. Children and adults may differ in styles and force of grief. However, the feelings and emotions that come with death are very similar. The journey through grief is long and arduous; however, the potential for growth and understanding is limitless for the child as well as the adult.



**“A journey of one thousand miles begins with a single step.”**

# Loneliness

Everybody knows what loneliness is. We have all been lonely at one time or another. However, when we attempt to describe loneliness, we think of being alone. This is only partially true. I have often been alone and felt quite content, and yet some of my loneliest memories are when I was in the midst of a crowd. Because of these feelings, I believe that other people play a small and indirect role in our loneliness.

A more useful concept of loneliness is to think in terms of isolation. This vague feeling of being lonely comes to us when we are feeling apart, or somehow disconnected, from other people. Loneliness is more keenly felt when this separation is experienced with a loved one. The ultimate, or final separation, occurs when a loved one dies. Anyone who has experienced grief knows this feeling – the void we experience when we have loved someone – and then suddenly that person is no longer with us to share our love. This creates a vacuum that strikes the core of our very selves, and absorbs much of our energies. We call this the grieving process.

Loneliness brings with it many symptoms: isolation, feeling alone even in a crowd, abandonment, rejection, a feeling of being misunderstood, indecisiveness, confusion, and being afraid. These symptoms over a period of time lead to a feeling of depression. When the individual feels inadequate, they then experience low self-esteem. It is very important that we realize that loneliness, and then depression, are necessary steps in the grieving process.

What can we do when we feel lonely? The first step is to admit to ourselves that we are feeling this way. Only then can we do something about it. Next, we must lean into our loneliness: we must explore it, walk through it, and eventually grow from it.

Loneliness can be a vital, positive, and helpful experience. As unpleasant as loneliness is, it forces us to deal with our “aloneness”; our very selves. Loneliness allows us to closely examine ourselves in order to come to terms with those areas in which we need to grow, as well as realizing our many positive qualities. Only then can we appreciate our wonderful uniqueness. In other words, loneliness ultimately allows us to get to know ourselves a little bit better, and then to feel more comfortable with ourselves. This growth is known as individuation, or the process of becoming content with oneself.



There are many things we can do to enhance this process:

- Keep a journal to record your journey.
- Read books on loneliness for more understanding.
- Develop a hobby to enhance creative growth.
- Volunteer your services to enrich other lives.
- Talk to other about these feelings (clergy, counselor, friend, family member, etc).
- Learn the beauty of solitude by setting aside time for yourself each day—in order to collect your thoughts, meditate, or just be with yourself.

**It is important to know that you are not alone. Change and adjustment means growth and loneliness is a necessary ingredient in the process of letting go.**



## Hope is a Thing with Feathers

Hope is a thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without  
the words,  
And never stops at all,  
And sweetest in the gale is  
heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little  
bird  
That kept so many warm.  
I've heard it in the chilliest  
land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

– *Emily Dickinson*

# Depression

- Consider asking for grief and loss counseling from your local hospice.
- Recognize that the major responsibility for alleviating your depression lies with you. It is important to acknowledge it and to be open to accepting help.
- Realize that depression serves a purpose. It is best to face it and work through it, rather than avoid it.
- Talk things over with an understanding friend or loved one. It may help you avoid severe depression.
- See a physician for a complete checkup and discussion of your symptoms.
- Redirect energy in more constructive channels so there is more pleasure in your life. Pleasure is a source of energy. Take a break for a favorite activity, an evening out, a trip, etc.
- Exercise helps you relax, work off bottled-up tension, and sleep better.
- Work on your sorrow. Lean into your pain. Allow yourself to experience the many feelings you have, such as anger, guilt, etc.
- Become involved with people –volunteer or find ways to help others.
- Try to look at life more positively. Try not to expect that bad things will happen. Make efforts that good will happen.
- Avoid extra stress or big changes if possible.
- Remember that good nutrition is important for mental and physical health.
- Seek professional help if depression is severe or persistent. It will not be as debilitating or as enduring as it would be if ignored or suffered alone.
- Examine your feelings to figure out what's specifically troubling you and what can be done to help.
- Write down negative thoughts and sort through them for the ones that you might be able to solve. Dealing with problems one at a time helps.
- Consider yoga and meditation.
- Depression has its roots in hopelessness. Hold on to hope – grief and depression management takes time.
- Acceptance of the loss and resultant depression makes it less painful.
- If you feel guilty, seek forgiveness. Find alternatives to self-punishment.
- Attempt thinking pleasant thoughts for one minute. This may take practice but it is a helpful habit to cultivate.
- For someone in depression, it is important to remember that alcohol itself is a depressant.
- Do something you do well, such as a hobby or special activity. Little accomplishments help you rediscover your self-confidence.
- Remember, you have a choice. Depression can be managed. It doesn't have to ruin lives.

*We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey.*

-Kenji Miyazawa

## Signs of Symptoms of Depression

- **Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.** A bleak outlook – nothing will ever get better and there's nothing you can do to improve your situation.
- **Loss of interest in daily activities.** No interest in former hobbies, pastimes, social activities, or sex. You've lost your ability to feel joy and pleasure.
- **Appetite or weight changes.** Significant weight loss or weight gain – a change of more than 5 percent of body weight in a month.
- **Sleep changes.** Either insomnia, especially waking in the early hours of the morning, or oversleeping (also known as hypersomnia).
- **Irritability or restlessness.** Feeling agitated, restless, or on edge. Your tolerance level is low; everything and everyone gets on your nerves.
- **Loss of energy.** Feeling fatigued, sluggish, and physically drained. Your whole body may feel heavy and even small tasks are exhausting or take longer to complete.
- **Self-loathing.** Strong feelings of worthlessness or guilt. You harshly criticize yourself for perceived faults and mistakes.
- **Concentration problems.** Trouble focusing, making decisions, or remembering things.
- **Unexplained aches and pains.** An increase in physical complaints such as headaches, back pain, aching muscles.

