

MOURNER'S RIGHTS

When your parent, child, sibling or partner dies, you become a mourner. You stay a mourner for at least a year.

While you are a mourner, you are at a higher-than-usual risk for:

- dying,
- getting a new illness,
- getting a flare-up of an illness you already have,
- not getting enough sleep (or sleeping too much),
- becoming malnourished,
- making decisions that you later regret,
- thinking that you are losing your mind.

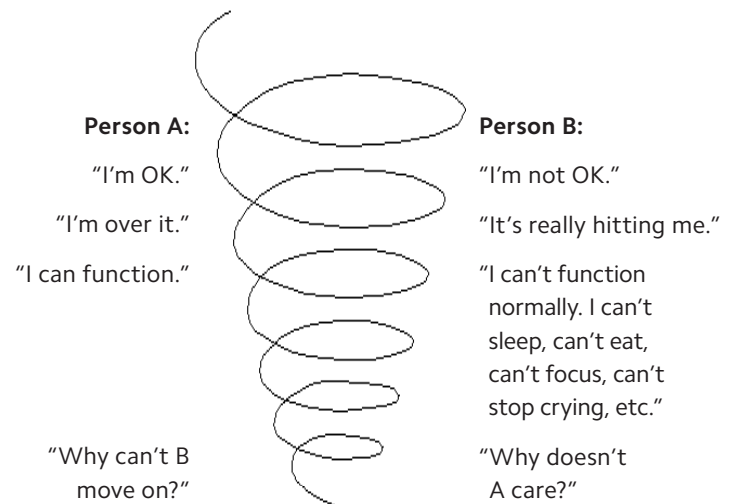
On the positive side, you are also more likely than usual to:

- notice what you appreciate about being alive,
- become more aware of your deepest values and top priorities,
- get a clear view of the status of all your relationships.

You deserve lots of extra support while you are a mourner. You deserve help to protect your physical and mental health, and you deserve support to take advantage of what is special and precious about mourning. This is true whether the person who died was young or old, whether the two of you were close or estranged, whether the person died slowly or suddenly, and whether you expected the person's death to "get to you."

In some cultures, a mourner is considered legally insane for a year. The mourner is allowed to blaspheme, break promises, wake people up at night, change his or her mind repeatedly, and express emotions, including anger at the one who has died. While our culture may not provide as much grace to mourners, you should give yourself a break.

Many mourners find that grief takes the shape of a spiral. You spin from feeling normal to grief-stricken, and back again. Often, two members of a mourning family will find themselves on opposite sides of the spiral.



The swings get less dramatic as time goes by, but they don't stop happening entirely.

If you would like to talk about your grief, or any other issues, please visit your family physician.