



LOSS OF A SPECIAL PERSON

There are a number of situations in life where a person may suffer a major loss, but unfortunately, the loss may not be acknowledged by society. These losses may not be perceived as important enough to be mourned for anything but a brief period of time.

When the severed relationship is not openly acknowledged, **often there are no bereavement rituals to help you cope with the loss.** You may miss the confirmation, expression and support people offer others after a death. Whether or not others perceive this loss as significant will not determine whether or not you grieve. Rather, it is the nature and meaning of this particular loss to you that will determine whether you mourn.

Relationships with neighbors, colleagues, co-workers, in-laws, a former spouse or close friend are not considered major relationships by many. The loss of a nephew or niece, grandchild, aunt or uncle may also be discounted. Yet, you know the person who died was exceptionally close to you as well as being influential in your life. The deceased can range from being a confidante to being a pivotal person who changed your life. In the best of relationships, this special person may have shared your secrets, challenged your goals and supported your dreams. By virtue of their not being a part of your immediate family, they may have been able to assist you in ways your spouse, parents, children or brothers and sisters could not. They were close enough to be concerned, while distant enough to be somewhat objective and as a result, were very important to you.

In many of the above mentioned relationships, a close and sometimes intense attachment has been severed. **If you aren't able to express what you feel, problems in working through your grief can be expected.** To avoid these problems, you should never, never hesitate to reach out to others. Find a "safe person"...one who offers little or no advice, but just listens and allows you to express your feelings, cry when you want and laugh when you can. "Safe people" will let you be who you are as you progress through readjustment. They believe every individual possesses an inner strength, an untapped potential, to make it even in the worst of circumstances. They also realize that there is no one "right way" to grieve nor is there a timetable to your grief. It is true that grief shared is grief diminished. However, one cannot understand the full meaning of your loss unless you share with them what your relationship with the deceased meant to you.

What is the unique nature and meaning of your loss and the relationship that has been severed? Your grief depends upon what you perceive yourself to have lost. Each loss must be viewed from the bereaved person's own frame of reference. One cannot use his or her own standards to determine the impact of the loss on another human being; rather, one must try to comprehend what it means specifically to that mourner. For example, a person should not automatically assume that a brother or sister's death would bring more grief than a friend's. The death of a friend may carry more impact than that of a sibling if the grieving person has had a more intimate relationship with that friend. Not everyone responds in a similar fashion to the same loss. Not all losses mean the same thing to all people.

NEVER DENY YOUR GRIEF. By sharing your thoughts, feelings and memories of the deceased, you will be taking healthy first steps on your path to recovery.