

Understandings Within the Family That Can Help

1. If any family member needs space to be alone and quiet, it will be given.
2. If any family member needs closeness, it will be given upon request or upon sensing that closeness is needed.
3. Nobody needs to hide their sorrow or cry alone in the pillow. When tears come you are allowed to let them flow.
4. Periodically we will get together as a family to assess how we are adjusting to the loss. We will never take it for granted that we are doing well just because we aren't talking about it.
5. On holidays and anniversaries during the first year we will make it a point to talk about the person who is gone. Expect some sorrow on these days, but plan something meaningful to do also.
6. Expect that there will be a gradual buildup of residual sorrow that may manifest itself in unpleasant ways that affect family harmony. We will try to see what is behind these flare-ups.
7. Some of us in the family will adjust sooner than others.
8. Understand that no one family member can meet all of one person's needs. It is all right if we turn to people outside of the family for help. We will not be afraid to lean on others during our intense grief.
9. If one of us is touchy, we will try to remember that we have all been deeply injured by our loss. We are bruised and hurting. The pain lingers even though it may not be openly discussed.
10. Understand that the world soon forgets about our loss. They act as if nothing ever happened. Outside support is withdrawn too soon, therefore the family will need to support one another over the long haul.
11. We will not expect any one person in this family to be the "strong" person who supports the rest of the family. Trying to be strong often postpones grief and adjustment. If any one of us feels like he or she is "falling apart," help outside the family will be approved of without any questions.
12. Disposing of personal items belonging to the one who is gone will be done slowly and with the feelings of all the family taken into consideration.
13. We will not assume that any family member is too young or too old to grieve. The young and the old need to talk over their feelings about the loss.
14. We will not make any hasty decisions or moves during the first year of our grief.
15. We will not be surprised if a family member experiences a temporary loss of faith. Questioning is a normal part of trying to make sense out of what happened. We will listen to the questions without being judgmental.