



HOSPICE of LENAWEE
We Carry Your Heart In Our Heart

Anticipatory Grief

What is Anticipatory Grief?

Anticipatory grief is a normal response when we become aware that death may occur. When a life-threatening illness is diagnosed or a terminal prognosis is given, it is natural for grief to begin. Grief and loss are inherent in the caregiving process and is experienced by everyone involved – from the patient to family members, partners, friends, and caregivers. It is important to be aware of anticipatory grief and learn ways to process pain and loss. Doing so has benefits for patients and caregivers alike.

Anticipatory grief is not just about accepting the future death, but also grieving the many losses already occurring as an illness progresses. Some losses can feel significant and sudden, such as the loss of an income. Some are anticipated and worrisome, such as the loss of companionship that a loved one had always provided. The process of reacting and continually adapting to these losses – past, present, and future – are all encountered in this experience. These losses may be accompanied by different grief reactions.

Examples of Anticipatory Losses:

- Mobility
- Independence
- Cognition
- Hope
- Future Dreams
- Financial Security
- Identity

Common Anticipatory Grief Reactions:

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Behavioral</u>	<u>Emotional</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>
Difficulty Sleeping Headaches Exhaustion Loss of appetite Shortness of breath Dizziness Aches and Pains	Withdrawing Spending more or less time with family member Repeatedly talking about how the family member may die Crying or inability to cry Keeping busy	Sadness Guilt Anxiety Helplessness Anger Yearning Overwhelmed Self-blame	Difficulty concentrating Need for information Disbelief Worry about “what ifs”

Follow up with physician and mental health professional as needed

Reminders for Caregivers:

This is your first time

You and your loved one are going through the dying process and experiencing it together for the first time. You may make missteps along the way, so please forgive yourself by learning and moving forward.

Your loved one can hear you

Continue to tell stories and talk to your loved one even if they are unable to respond with words. It is very likely they can still hear you.

Your role is unique

Even though the doctors, nurses, and aides may be providing a level of care for your loved one, your special care provides love, comfort, and reassurance through your familiar touch, voice, and presence.

Allow others to help

Remember that every family member or friend serves a different role in the dying process, much like the relationships they have had throughout your loved one's life. Each individual involved in caregiving may have their own way of providing care.

Take care of yourself

Self-care may seem like a luxury, but being diligent about caring for yourself will ultimately result in better care for your loved one. Consider the following:

- *Set aside time for you, to rest and renew*
- *Expect a range of emotions, which may increase in intensity over time*
- *Keep a journal of your feelings*
- *Exercise, eat well, and do activities you enjoy*
- *Explore ways family members and friends can help*
- *Utilize strategies that have helped you in the past*
- *Seek out a caregiver support group or counselor*

Our Mission:

Hospice of Lenawee provides compassionate, patient and family-centered care to the people of our community during and after the last season of life.

Grief Resource Center:

Visit hospiceoflenawee.org/grief-support or call us at (517) 263-2323 to request support or educational materials.

