Dear Alice,

What is the difference between grief and major depression? A few months ago, my boyfriend died in a car accident. Lately, I have been very depressed, but I am not sure if it is just part of the normal grief process or if it is depression.

? Crying all the time

Answer

Dear Crying all the time,

There is no set process or time length for the grief one experiences after losing someone close. It's normal to experience grief for a year or even longer, especially when the death is sudden and unexpected. You need to allow yourself adequate time to process how you feel, without expecting or trying to force yourself to experience your grief in any set way. Grief is a normal path that often results in healing.

Grief and depression can often seem alike, especially to someone who is actively grieving. Grief encompasses different things for different people. You might notice physical or behavioral changes, recurrent thoughts about the person who died, tears, rage, and/or sadness. You might experience some, all, or none of these things. It's good to allow yourself to feel and acknowledge what you're going through in a way that you're comfortable with (and in a way that you don't harm yourself and/or others).

Reaching out is a crucial step in your healing. If you're worried or frightened of any feelings that you have, if you'd like to be able to talk about your emotions in a comforting environment, or if you feel overwhelmed, stuck, or overcome with sadness, you may want to speak with a mental health professional, clergy person, or social worker. In addition, consider check out the related Q&As for more information on seeking resources. If you ever find yourself thinking suicidal thoughts, it's important to seek out someone to talk to immediately. You can speak with someone at Lifeline [2], 24 hours a day/ 7 days per week, by calling 1 (800) 273-TALK (8255). If you're a college student, you might seek out counseling services on campus or in the local community.

Wishing you solace and comfort during this difficult time,

Alice!

Category:
Emotional Health [3]
Blues & Depression [4]

Related questions

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Resources

Nightline (Morningside/Barnard) [11]
Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (Morningside) [12]
Mental Health Service (CUMC) [13]

Published date:
Dec 12, 2002
Last reviewed on:
Jan 20, 2015

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If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

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