Grieving is a process of letting go of what might have been or should have been. It is a time for making peace with the reality of your loss and for saying "goodbye."

Try not to worry about "Am I grieving correctly?" You'll do it in your own style and at your own pace. There is no correct way to grieve.

Realize you may also be mourning the dreams you had for the deceased. As a spouse or lover, it may be the house you planned to buy together or that special trip you never got to take. As a parent, it may be the hopes for your child. It is especially difficult for a parent to have a child die. It is not part of the natural order of things for a parent to bury his or her child.

Don't deny your urges to exercise your faith, religion or spirituality. It may provide some needed comfort and answers.

We don't always have control over memories. That special song can reawaken old feelings. Just acknowledge to yourself that although painful, this is another normal aspect of grief. Feelings remind us that we are still alive as well as rekindling memories of our dead loved one.

After the initial shock and disbelief a period of disorganization may happen. The hardest time of all may be long after everyone else is gone. Things are settled down and life returns to what it was before, only your loved one has died. Be aware that the loss is settling in. You may feel empty inside.

Birthdays, anniversaries and holidays following the death of a loved one may be especially painful.

You may be very angry at the deceased for dying. This is normal. Forgiveness plays an important part in grief. You may need to forgive him or her for dying and leaving you. You may need to forgive yourself for all the things you could have done or would have done differently.

A loved one's death can trigger old memories of other losses; a parent, a sibling, a divorce, being fired. These memories may make this time even more painful.

A point of understanding and acceptance eventually occurs. The preoccupation with what has happened and with your dead loved one does diminish over time. The intense feelings lessen, and memories become less painfull. A renewed interest in other people and in life in general does occur.

Rest and take care of yourself, but beware of isolating yourself from friends, family and living.

Throughout it all, remember that others can help. This is not a time to be alone. you're entitled to all the help you can get. A friend, family member, social worker, or a clergy person may be useful people to reach out to. If your loved one died from AIDS inquire if the local AIDS service organization or hospital offers special bereavement groups for anyone who has lost someone to AIDS. Mourning needs resolution in order for you to go on with your life.

Resources for Further Information

AIDS ACTION Line
(617) 536-7733
1-800-235-2331

Pastoral Concerns Subcommittee – AAC
(617) 348-1303

Boston City AIDS Hotline
(617) 424-5916

AIDS Project Worcester
(508) 755-3773

Latino AIDS Hotline
(Bilingual Spanish/English)
(617) 262-7248

Bilingual AIDS Hotline
(English/Spanish, Springfield, MA)
1-800-637-3776

SPAL Portuguese AIDS Hotline
(617) 628-6065
1-800-232-SPAL

AIDS ACTION Committee
131 Clarendon Street
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 437-6200

Copyright © 1988 Chelsea Psychotherapy Associates

The authors work together at
Chelsea Psychotherapy Associates, Suite 1305,
80 Eighth Avenue, NYC, NY 10011.

Saying Goodbye to Someone You Love

By Dixie Beckham CSW, ACSW;
Luis Palacios-Jimenez CSW, ACSW;
Vincent John Patti CSW
& Michael Shernoff CSW, ACSW

This brochure was printed by
the AIDS ACTION Committee of Massachusetts