“...the death of a parent is not something that becomes easier with age, nor is it a loss that fades with time: on the contrary, a parent’s death stays with you and shapes you for the rest of your life; it becomes a condition of your existence, like having blue eyes or black hair.”

Rebecca Abrams: “When Parents Die” Routledge, 2000

For more information about grief support services on the North Shore, please contact:

Every Day Counts Program
everydaycounts@vch.ca
604-363-0961
everydaycounts.ca

Prepared by the North Shore Palliative & Supportive Care Program 604-984-3743

For more copies, go online at vch.eduhealth.ca or email phem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. GV.257.A39
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Grief is a Natural Response

Grief is the powerful, often painful and confusing, response to a loss. It can change how you feel, physically and emotionally, how you think and behave. It is important to remember that there is no ‘normal’ way to grieve.

Grief is a difficult experience; understanding the many feelings and experiences involved will not take the pain away, but it can help make it more manageable.

Effects of Grief

Loss of appetite, sleeplessness, absent-mindedness, and unexpected emotions are just some of the signs and symptoms of grief.

Grief is unpredictable. It does not stay the same each day but rather comes in waves causing many different emotions.

Powerful Feelings

A parent’s death can shatter a lifetime bond.

"Dad was always there – I knew I could rely on him. What will I do now?"

Grief can be made worse by other people’s insensitivity and lack of understanding. The gap that has appeared in your life may be invisible to those around you.

Few relationships are trouble-free. Your parent’s death may remove the chance to resolve difficulties or make amends and can leave you struggling with powerful feelings of regret, guilt, and anger.

Changed Relationships

The death of a parent may result in significant changes in your relationships with other family members. You may feel a greater sense of responsibility to support and care for a surviving parent – a responsibility that can be difficult to manage as you cope with your grief.

Family members may also feel pulled in different directions as everyone has had a different relationship with the person who died.

Arguments and differences of opinion may occur, such as over wills, property, and personal effects.

Siblings may also find that the death of a parent brings up feelings of old jealousies or rivalries from childhood.

As you grieve:

• Try to be patient and understanding with yourself as you come to terms with your loss
• Allow yourself time to express your feelings
• It may help to meet with someone outside of your family