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*“Recovery from grief is not a station you arrive at, but a manner of traveling.”*

-Dr. Ivan G. Mattern

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Adapted from materials of the  
National Catholic  
Bereavement Ministry

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If you or a loved one is grieving,  
please contact the parish office to  
see what resources are available to you.



CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE *of* RALEIGH

# The Physical Symptoms of Grieving

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CATHOLIC GRIEF SUPPORT SERIES

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**Bereavement Ministry Leader Support**  
ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF RALEIGH

# The Physical Symptoms of Grieving

## Grieving is work.

The exhaustion from grieving is similar to a heavy physical workout. These “symptoms” of grieving are sometimes mistakenly diagnosed as strictly physical problems.

### Common complaints are as follows:

- o chest pains or heart problems
- o dizziness
- o dry mouth
- o empty feeling in the stomach
- o fatigue
- o feeling of “something stuck in the throat”
- o headache
- o inability to sleep
- o loss of sexual desire or having an overly active sexual desire
- o loss of weight
- o nausea and vomiting
- o oversensitivity to noise
- o pain
- o purposeless activity
- o shortness of breath
- o trembling
- o uncontrollable sighing and sobbing
- o weakness in the muscles
- o various gastrointestinal symptoms: constipation, diarrhea

(This information taken from books and research by Lieberman and Jacobs, Worden, Olders, and Rando.)

Any of these symptoms can be a normal part of the grieving process, but if they persist or become very uncomfortable, please make an appointment with your physician and tell her/him that you have experienced a recent major loss. If you are on medication from your physician, do your best to continue to take it without fail.



## Key points to remember:

- **Experiencing symptoms is normal.**
- **Grieving is like heavy physical exercise.**
- **Remember to take your medications.**
- **Avoid sleeping medication.**
- **Utilize self-calming and relaxation techniques.**
- **Proper sleep and nutrition are important.**

***Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.***

***Matthew 11: 28***

Avoid over-the-counter sleeping medications, if possible. They may only further interfere with your sleep and your overall recovery.

Self-calming and relaxation techniques are very useful tools in coping with these physical symptoms of grief. Ask your health professional or local librarian about relaxation tapes to try, as well as a list of books and other materials that can help with relaxation. Doing what you can to relax your body and mind can help mitigate any of the symptoms of grieving.

Methods of self-calming and relaxing:

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| Touch  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soaking in a warm bath</li><li>• Getting a massage</li><li>• Stretching</li><li>• Playing with an animal</li></ul>                           |
| Taste  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sipping warm herbal tea</li><li>• Eating healthy food</li><li>• Eating a comforting meal</li></ul>   |
| Smell  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shopping for flowers</li><li>• Deeply breathing in fresh air</li><li>• Lighting a scented candle</li></ul>                                   |
| Sight  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading a good book</li><li>• Watching the clouds</li><li>• Watching a funny TV show</li></ul>   |
| Sound  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listening to relaxing music</li><li>• Singing to yourself</li><li>• Playing a musical instrument</li></ul>                                   |
| Prayer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Praying the Rosary</li><li>• Meditating on a Bible verse</li><li>• Sitting in adoration and allowing Jesus to comfort and calm you</li></ul> |