



Know the Facts: **You can cope with Grief**

What is grief?

Grief is the feeling you may get when you experience the loss of a family member or friend. Grief can also happen for other reasons.

When you are diagnosed with a chronic illness, you may have feelings of grief. Here are some ways you might experience loss:

- **Loss of Health.** You may not have energy to do the things you want to do.
- **Loss of Independence.** You may not be able to drive or walk.
- **Loss of Control.** You may have new “rules” to follow such as a new diet, having to wear oxygen or use a walker.
- **Loss of Family Role.** Sometimes a chronic illness limits your ability to fill the role you did before getting sick.

How can I cope with chronic illness?

When you are diagnosed with a chronic disease, you may feel very strong emotions. These feelings are different for each person, but are a normal part of grieving and reaction to loss. Some emotions you may feel include shock, disbelief, denial, fear and anger.

How you handle other problems in your life will affect how you can cope with your chronic illness. People learn how to cope when they deal with a problem. Here are some tips to help you cope:

- Learn about your illness.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of your condition. Know what to look for and what to do if your symptoms get worse.
- Learn about your healthcare provider’s “Treatment Plan” for you. Make sure you know about your medicines, what foods you should eat and what kind of activity you should do.
- Keep a positive attitude. Focus on what you CAN do, not on the things you can’t do.
- Find a support system. Talk with your family and friends about your condition. Join a local support group where you can learn how others are dealing with the same illness.
- Find an outlet for feelings of anger, denial or fear. Sitting quietly, take a few slow, deep breaths throughout the day. Try prayer. Learn a new hobby or craft, listen to music or write down your feelings in a notebook.
- Ask for help if you feel depressed. Talk to your healthcare provider or **Healthy Together!** Health Coach.
- Accept what you cannot change. Try asking, “If this is my situation, what changes can I make so that I can live the best possible life?”



You might experience grief if you are diagnosed with a chronic illness. But you can learn to cope and accept what you cannot change.

**Call 1-888-545-1710 to speak to a nurse 24-hours a day
or visit www.WYHealthyTogether.com**

Disclaimer: Information or education provided in this fact sheet is not intended to replace medical advice from your healthcare provider. The information provided on this fact sheet is not all-inclusive of this topic.

Source: Coping with Chronic Illness. National Institutes of Health

Healthy Together! is offered by the Wyoming Department of Health to all Wyoming EqualityCare clients at no cost. The program provides one-on-one support from a nurse, educational materials to encourage the self-management of health and assistance in coordinating care among multiple providers. **Healthy Together!** also provides EqualityCare clients with information on weight loss, smoking cessation, and how to adopt healthy lifestyles. **Healthy Together!** was named the Best Government Disease Management Program by the Disease Management Association of America in 2005.