Grief and Expectations for Yourself

The following, suggested by Therese Rando, is a list of appropriate expectations that you can have in grief, depending on the intensity of the loss. Evaluate yourself on each one and see if you are maintaining realistic expectations for yourself.

You can expect that:

- Your grief will probably take longer than most people think.
- Your grief will probably take more energy than you would have ever imagined.
- Your grief will probably involve many changes and be continually developing.
- Your grief will probably show itself in all spheres of your life: psychological, social, spiritual, and physical.
- You will grieve for many things both symbolic and tangible, not just the death alone.
- Your grief will probably entail mourning, not only for the actual person you have lost, but also for all the hopes, dreams, and unfulfilled expectations you held for that person, and for the needs that will go unmet because of the death.
- Your grief will involve a wide variety of feelings and reactions, not solely those that are generally thought of as grief, such as depression and sadness.
- You may have some identity confusion as a result of this major loss and of the reactions you are experiencing that may be quite different for you.
- You may have a combination of anger and depression such as irritability, frustration, annoyance, or intolerance.
- You may feel some anger and guilt, or at least some manifestations of these emotions.
- You may lack self-esteem.
- You may experience grief spasms; acute upsurges of grief that occur suddenly with no warning.
- You may have trouble thinking and making decisions.
- You may find yourself having a number of physical reactions.
- You may find that there are certain dates, events, stimuli, or even experiences that bring upsurges of grief.
- Society will have unrealistic expectations about your mourning and may respond inappropriately to you.
- You may begin to search for meaning and may question your religion and/or philosophy of life.