

Useful Phone Numbers:

Lifeline 24 hour counselling service

PH 131114

Carers Resource Centre

PH 1800242636 (free call)

Amputees and Families Support Group Qld

PH: 07 32904293

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Queensland Amputee Limb Service
Tel: [07] 38963770

Painting by artist Randy Johnson

Adapting to Limb Loss

An abstract painting of a coral reef with vibrant colors like blue, green, yellow, and red. The text "Feelings and behaviours of friends and family" is overlaid in white with a black outline.

Feelings and behaviours
of friends and family

Grief and Loss

- Loss is something everyone goes through.
- It is difficult to deal with loss because we don't like to experience negative feelings
- However, grieving is a necessary part of the healing process and various emotions are a "normal" part of that experience.
- Grieving does not always occur in any special order.

Some Typical Feelings and Behaviours of Family and Friends

- Family and friends go through a grief and loss process similar to the person who has lost a limb.
- It's a major change for everyone concerned.
- Often so much time and energy is expended on taking care of the amputee that the caregiver scarcely recognises that he or she is utterly exhausted.
- "Busy activity" is typical of the early adjustment period.
- If activity continues for an extended time, it can be a form of denial on the part of family/friends.
- If the activity stops, the caregiver will have to face a life that has drastically changed.
- Once this reality has set in then the feelings automatically come flooding through.
- The caregiver might become vulnerable to all types of problems, become susceptible to illness or disease, or experience physical symptoms, including headaches, fatigue, insomnia or stomach upset, that can develop as a result of repressed feelings.
- Caregivers' jobs and relationships often suffer too.

Tips for Family and Friends

If you are going through the stages of loss, there are several things you can do to ease the process:

- **Express your feelings.** An expression of loss does not mean you are going to have a breakdown; it means the feelings are trying to get through.
- **Understand that loss comes in waves so be patient with yourself.** Don't try to resist the waves of feelings—instead, allow yourself to flow with them and keep in mind that "this too shall pass."
- **Take extra care of yourself during this time.** Don't focus all of your time and attention on your loved one. Your energy will be exhausted so take time to rest. This isn't being selfish!
- **Accept support from family and friends.** It is a way for them to show you how much they care.
- **Ask for what you need.** Often, it is just having someone listen to your feelings about the changes that are taking place in your life. This simple process can, however, lead to healing.
- **Realise that adjustment can be exhausting.** Get lots of rest, eat healthful foods, and exercise, especially during this time. Go out for coffee or take a break to get away from home, hospitals and clinics.
- **Put off unnecessary decisions.** Set small goals that can be achieved.
- **Get involved in your life to the degree that you are able.** Some people are able to do this sooner than others. Just do it at your own pace.
- **If you feel overwhelmed, speak to your doctor, counsellor or social worker who can assist and guide you.**