

Family Grieving After Brain Injury How to Mourn Resiliently (Handout #13)

- Every family experiences feelings of grief, guilt, despair, anger and frustration. These are normal reactions to an extraordinary loss. Physically, your child is still present, but emotionally it may feel like you have lost the son or daughter you once knew. Give yourself permission to grieve.
- Recognize that some people will not understand the impact of brain injury and what you are going through.
- Share your feelings. Seek out family members, friends and brain-injury support groups where you can share your emotions. Connect with other parents of children with brain injury. Don't do it alone.
- Become educated about brain injury. Check out www.brainline.org.
- Recognize that family members cope in different ways. You may not go through the same stages of grief at the same time. That's okay!
- Take breaks from the brain injury. Make a date with your partner or other children, or go on holiday where therapies and talk about the injury are suspended. Try to build in fun and normalizing activities.
- Recognize that grief can recur when your child hits milestones – such as graduating from high school or the anniversary of the injury. It's natural to feel sad when you're reminded of how things "might have been."
- Focus on building a 'new normal' as opposed to wishing you could turn the clock back.

Resources

ABI Peer Mentoring Program – People with ABI or a family member are matched with an individual coping with a similar ABI-related situation - phone or e-mail support (800) 263-5404. <http://obia.ca/peer-support2/>

Crooked Smile: One family's journey towards healing, Lainie Cohen, 2004.
Available at www.amazon.com or call Holland Bloorview's library, (416) 425-6220, ext. 3517.