



dealing with GRIEF AND LOSS

RESOURCES

The Grief Blog
www.thegriefblog.com

The Help Guide
www.helpguide.org/mental/grief_loss.htm

The Compassionate Friends
A national, self-help support organization for those grieving the loss of a child or sibling.
Toll Free 877-9690010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Fernside Bethesda Professional Building
Grief information, resources, and support for grieving children and their families.
513-745-0111
www.fernside.org

"...life is like a roller coaster ride – peaks and valleys, highs and lows, periods of joy and periods of grief. This should all be considered normal!"

Dr. Viktor Frankl,
Author of the international best seller,
Man's Search for Meaning

Just what is grief?

Grief is the psychological (and sometimes physical) pain that an individual experiences following a loss: loss of a loved one, loss of a friend, loss of a promotion, loss of a job, etc. The pain can be intense and can weigh heavily on the grieving person. The very word, 'grief' is derived from the French word, "greve" which translates to "heavy burden." When you consider somebody who has lost a relative and seemingly is "weighed down" with inner pain from the loss, the definition fits perfectly. Then again, the pain can also be mild and pass in a relatively short period of time.

There Are No "Happy Pills!"

There is nobody in the world that has not experienced some kind of loss and the resulting period of grief because of that loss. There are no "happy pills" out there in the real world that can wipe away that grief.

Whatever the loss, the grief that follows is a perfectly normal reaction that experts on the subject agree should not be stifled. Instead, they say, it should be taken as a normal part of the life experience and allowed to run its course. What is "normal," of course, may mean one thing to one person and something completely different for another.

One thing that is universally agreed upon is that when a grieving process becomes prolonged and begins to affect health, and normal obligations to family, work, community and self, this process may have gone beyond the bounds of normalcy and intervention may be needed.

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877-329-0578 • www.ESPublish.com • product #PB-DA151
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The Five Stages of Grief

Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, a noted Swiss-born American psychiatrist, devoted her life and practice to the study of the grieving process associated with death and dying. In 1969, Dr. Kubler-Ross introduced to the world what she called the "Five stages of Grief."

While her studies were based on persons facing death, many now apply those same five stages universally to any person facing, not just death, but also a negative experience in life which brings about various degrees of grief. According to Dr. Kubler-Ross, the paths followed by those persons in a grieving process are:

1. Denial: "This can't be happening to me!"
2. Anger: "Why is this happening? Who is to blame?"
3. Bargaining: "Make this not happen and in return I will ____."
4. Depression: "I'm too sad to do anything."
5. Acceptance: "I'm at peace with what is going to happen/has happened."

There is nothing concrete or "carved in stone" in Dr. Kubler-Ross' theory of the Five stages of Grief. She points out that the way a person grieves is as individual as the person who is grieving. Nor is there any timetable for grieving: Weeks? Months? There are no hard facts here. Some people grieve then return to what would be considered a 'normal life' filled with routine activity and hope within a few weeks. Others may drag through months or even years of a grief that tears at their souls and psyches.

Watch for Danger Signs

There are "danger signs" to watch for. While temporary grief is looked on as a normal response to misfortune, major, prolonged grief is a mental disorder that can lead to clinical depression and even suicide. You may assume the line between the two has been crossed if you have experienced or noticed the bereaved having:

- Strong feelings of guilt
- Thoughts of suicide or thoughts of death and dying
- Hallucinations of the deceased
- Feelings of despair
- Loss of appetite
- Inability to perform normal daily activities
- Desire to be alone
- Excessive sleeping or lack of sleep

When you experience the above symptoms of overly prolonged grieving or see these symptoms in others, it is time to take action.

Prolonged grief can lead to clinical depression and even suicide.



Never Grieve Alone

The first step on the journey to ending a prolonged and unhealthy grieving period is by talking to a person you trust: family member, friend, priest, minister, rabbi, physician. Nothing deepens depression more than thinking you're alone in the world and that nobody cares. Call that person you trust and offer to take them to lunch. Be honest. Tell them you simply need somebody to talk to about this ongoing depression.

If you detect the listed signs of ongoing depression in another person to whom you are close, reverse the process: Offer yourself as a sounding board. When you meet with the aggrieved person, don't talk! Listen! There's no need to give advice, well meaning as it may be. Following these informal sessions may be a good time to seek (or gently suggest) professional help. Remember: If you're helping another person, do it gently! Don't "insist" or "threaten." A calm, loving voice of suggestion and reassurance can mean the difference between success and failure.

Don't put it off, tomorrow may be too late!

Nothing deepens depression more than thinking you're alone in the world.

Everyone Cares

There are plenty of people out there who care. If you can't find a friend or a loved one you feel comfortable talking with, or if you know someone who is grieving who does not want to speak with friends or loved ones, there are professionals and nonprofit organizations that can help. Churches and community outreach centers are good places to start. There are many websites devoted to grief and licensed health professionals and psychiatrists within reach listed in the Yellow Pages.

