



# COPING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS

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# ABOUT ME:

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COMPLETED ONLINE CERTIFICATION IN TREATMENT OF GRIEF AND LOSS

# WHAT IS GRIEF?

**Grief** is the response to loss that contains thoughts, behaviors, emotions and physiological changes; if the loss is permanent, so too is the grief, but its form evolves and changes as a person adapts to the loss. **Acute grief** occurs in the early period after a loss and often dominates the life of a bereaved person; strong feelings of yearning, longing and sorrow are typical as are insistent thoughts and memories of the person who died. Other painful emotions, including anxiety, anger, remorse, guilt or shame are also common. Activities are often focused on doing or not doing things to try to deal with the loss.

**Mourning** is the outward, often public expression of grief/sorrow through behaviors, actions or rituals

**Bereavement** is the period of grief and mourning following the death of a loved one





# STAGES OF GRIEF

- **Denial:** This can't be happening.
- **Anger:** Why did this happen? Who is to blame?
- **Bargaining:** Make this not happen and I will...
- **Depression:** I can't bear this; I'm too sad to do anything.
- **Acceptance:** I acknowledge that this has happened, and I cannot change it.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969, *On Death and Dying*)

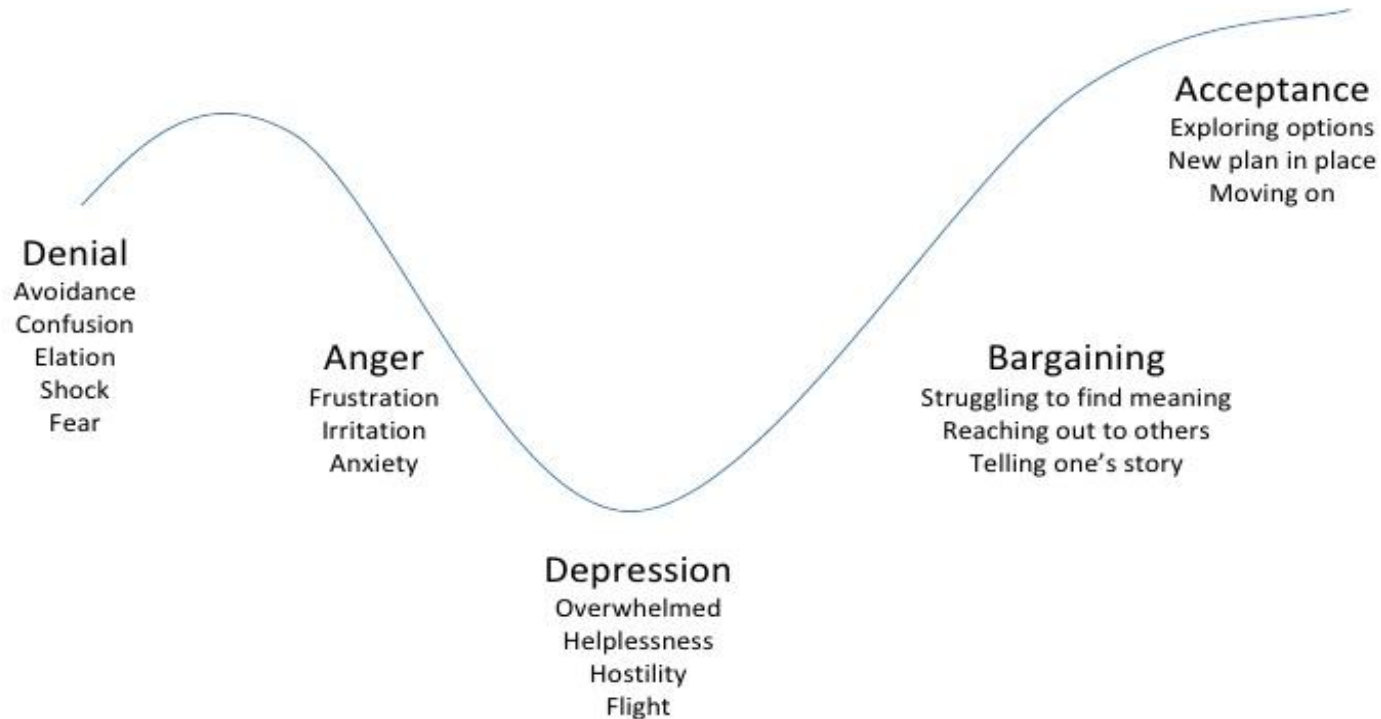
Positive-theory provides clarity during chaotic events

Negative-Criticism is that it is the only healthy way to grief; grief is universal, we all fit into the same boxes



# STAGES OF GRIEF

## Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle



Information and  
Communication

Emotional Support

Guidance and  
Direction

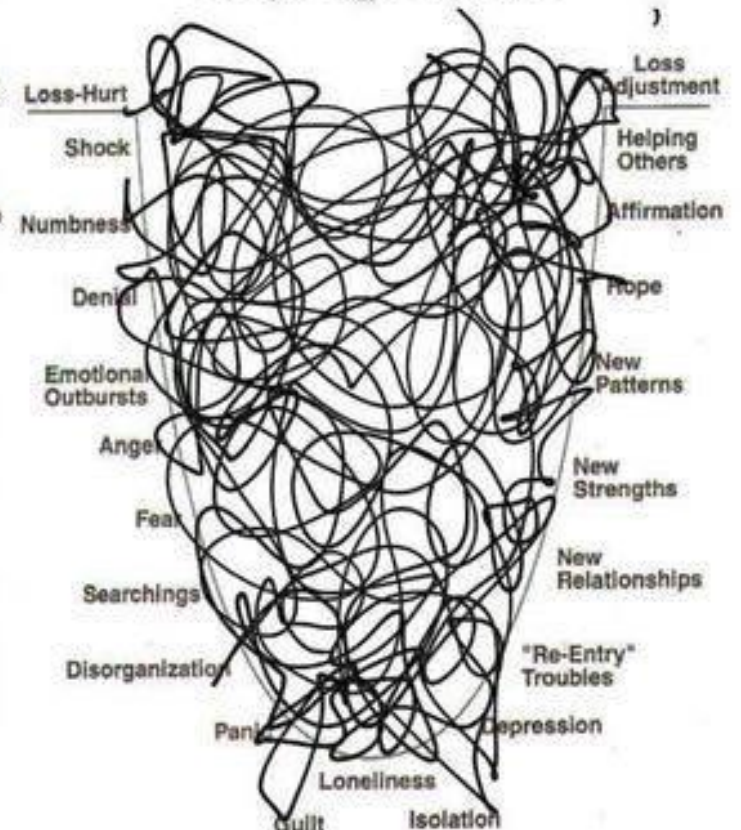
## REMEMBER:

- ❑ There is nothing abnormal in the grieving process
- ❑ Grief is not linear-may go through stages in different orders, many times
- ❑ There is no time limit
- ❑ Everyone grieves in their own way-no "right way"
- ❑ You are never wrong, and the work is never done

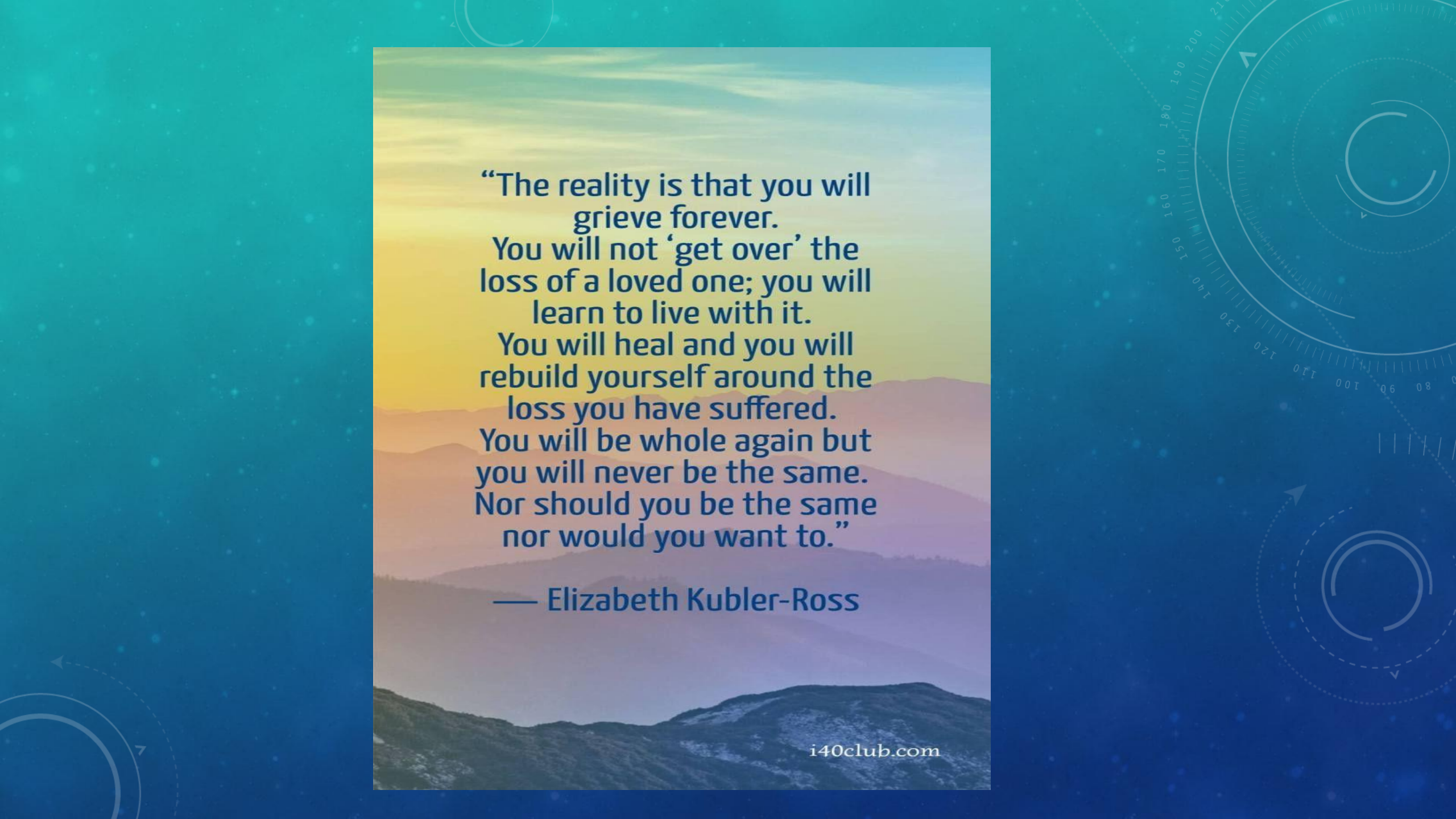
### STAGES OF GRIEF



### My experience







“The reality is that you will  
grieve forever.  
You will not ‘get over’ the  
loss of a loved one; you will  
learn to live with it.  
You will heal and you will  
rebuild yourself around the  
loss you have suffered.  
You will be whole again but  
you will never be the same.  
Nor should you be the same  
nor would you want to.”

— Elizabeth Kubler-Ross





# Kinds of Losses

Death

Dreams

Drug of choice

Physical Health

Career/job

Stability

Identity

Home

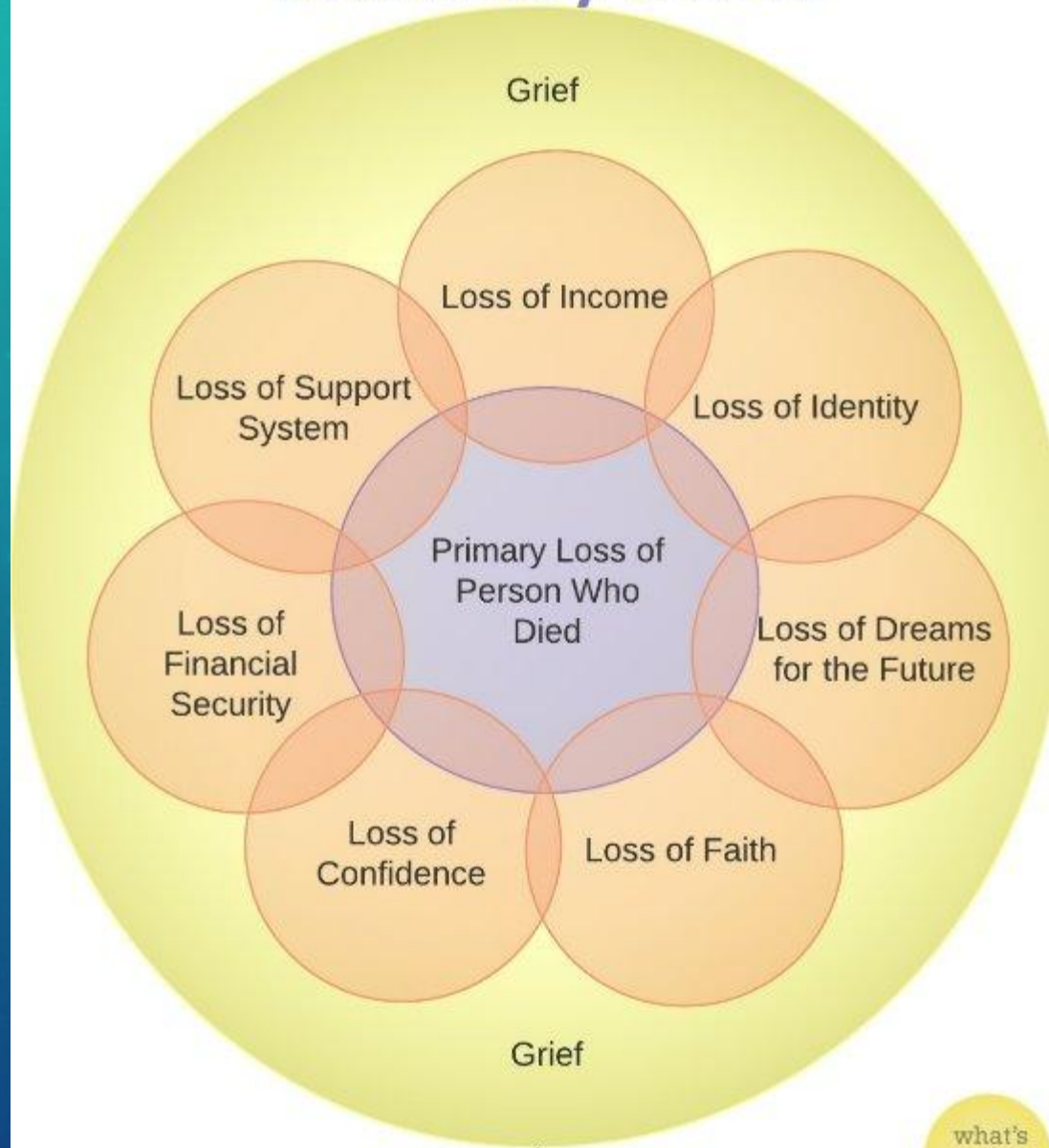
Normalcy

Relationships ending

Freedom

Custody of children

# Secondary Losses



# KINDS OF GRIEF/LOSS

- Anticipatory grief—grief that occurs before the death
- Abbreviated grief—grieving for a shorter time, often following anticipatory grief
- Delayed grief—often days/months/weeks later, if shock of loss pauses processing
- Inhibited grief—emotions may be repressed or person was never taught how to process
- Cumulative grief—experiencing multiple losses simultaneously, which can add complexity/challenges
- Ambiguous loss/grief—occurs without closure or clear understanding; leaves person searching (ex: missing person, loss of contact, Alzheimer's)



# KINDS OF GRIEF/LOSS

- Collective Grief-war, natural disaster, terrorism, pandemic
- Prolonged Grief-diagnosed 12 months after loss, severe symptoms that impact daily functioning
- Disenfranchised grief-(hidden grief) occurs when support group invalidates, makes insignificant. (Death is stigmatized-suicide/homicide, overdose, drunk driving), or relationship was not validated (extramarital affair)  
<https://eterneva.com/resources/disenfranchised-grief>
- Nonfinite Grief-grieving the life you expected (ex: career, relationship, children, illness/injury)

# WHAT CAN GRIEF DO?

- Lead to other MH diagnoses—  
anxiety, depression
- Withdrawal/isolation
- Relationship problems
- Loss of self-esteem, self-doubt
- Difficulty in daily functioning  
(concentration, memory,  
decision-making, completing  
tasks)

## HOW GRIEF MIGHT SHOW UP IN YOUR BODY

Aches and pains that can feel like the flu, back pain, joint pain, and stiffness

Tightness in the chest, shortness of breath, and shallow breathing

Nausea or stomach pain

Lowered immune system

Increased inflammation

Increased blood pressure

Headaches

Noise sensitivity

Extreme fatigue, feelings of heaviness

Dizziness and dry mouth

Change in eating patterns, eating more, or eating less

Can't sleep, afraid to sleep or mixed up sleep cycles



# SUGGESTIONS FOR SUPPORTERS OF THOSE WITH GRIEF





# SHOW UP. LISTEN. DON'T FIX.

## ABOVE ALL, SHOW YOUR LOVE.

Be willing to stand beside the gaping hole that has opened in your friend's life, without flinching or turning away. Your steadiness of presence is the absolute best thing you can give.

## REAL SUPPORT FOR REAL PEOPLE.

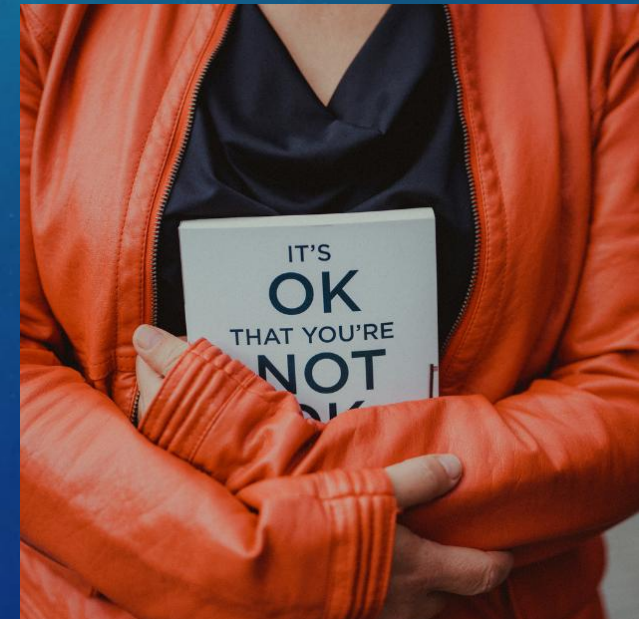


Each of us, each one of us, has to find our way into that middle ground. A place that doesn't ask us to deny our grief and doesn't doom us forever. A place that honors the full breadth of grief, which is really the full breadth of love.

-Megan Devine

[How to Help a Grieving Friend: The Animation – Refuge In Grief](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HznVuCVQd10>



# DO'S AND DON'TS



## The Best Things to Say to Someone in Grief

1. I am so sorry for your loss.
2. I wish I had the right words, just know I care.
3. I don't know how you feel, but I am here to help in any way I can.
4. You and your loved one will be in my thoughts and prayers.
5. My favorite memory of your loved one is...
6. I am always just a phone call away
7. Give a hug instead of saying something
8. We all need help at times like this, I am here for you
9. I am usually up early or late, if you need anything
10. Saying nothing, just be with the person

## The Worst Things to Say to Someone in Grief

1. At least she lived a long life, many people die young
2. He is in a better place
3. She brought this on herself
4. There is a reason for everything
5. Aren't you over him yet, he has been dead for awhile now
6. You can have another child still
7. She was such a good person God wanted her to be with him
8. I know how you feel
9. She did what she came here to do and it was her time to go
10. Be strong



# BEST AND WORST TRAITS OF PEOPLE TRYING TO HELP

## The Best Traits

- Supportive, but not trying to fix it
- About feelings
- Non active, not telling anyone what to do
- Admitting can't make it better
- Not asking for something or someone to change feelings
- Recognize loss
- Not time limited

## The Worst Traits

- They want to fix the loss
- They are uncomfortable about our discomfort
- They are directive in nature
- They rationalize or try to explain loss
- They may be judgmental
- May minimize the loss
- Put a timeline on loss



# INDIVIDUAL GRIEVING STYLE

## INTUITIVE GRIEF

- Grief is experienced as waves of emotion
- Grief expression mirrors inner feelings and emotions; comfortable with tears
- More feeling than thinking
- Focused on exploring and expressing feelings and processing emotions
- Stereotypically more common in women

## INSTRUMENTAL GRIEF

- Grief is experienced in more physical or cognitive ways
- Grief is expressed in more physical, cognitive, or behavioral ways
- More thinking than feeling; intellectual, factual
- Focused on doing and actively responding to grief
- Stereotypically more common in men

# GRIEF IN FAMILIES



- Grief unbalances; emotions differ
- Different behaviors based on family role (i.e. oldest sibling might take on caregiver role if parent dies) and roles may change
- If a death changes one member, the whole system changes in response to that member
- How we grieve may be learned based on values, norms, religion, etc.

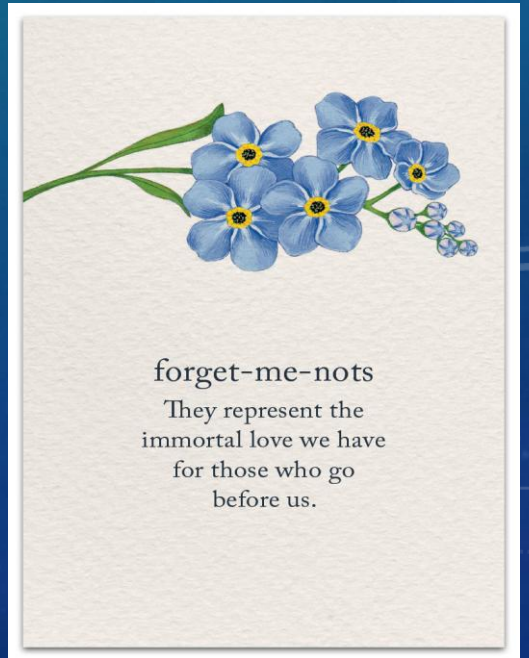


# GRIEF ACROSS CULTURES





# COPING SKILLS, TOOLS, AND RITUALS



# MEMORIALIZING DECEASED LOVED ONES



- Creative photo and message displays
- Memorial releases–balloons, lanterns, butterflies
- Memorial jewelry/objects
- Letter writing
- Dinner party with their favorite meal and loved ones
- Plant a tree
- Donations/charities
- Memory stones

# CREATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Letters to self—from adult to child, present self to future self
- Loss box—How is it decorated? What is in it? Whole family can write notes throughout the year
- Family coat of arms—good project for kids
- The Grief Spot —physical place
- Grief ball—ornament with wishes or special messages inside to hang for holiday, special occasion, etc.
- Linking Objects—memorializing with material possessions of loved one—validates relationship, facilitates remembrance, encourages expression of feelings, represents bereaved & relationship, manages separation anxiety



# KEEPING POSITIVE MEMORIES ALIVE

- It helps to smile/laugh about a memory
- Can make the dark days lighter
- Helpful to hold on to positive moments—when loved one was healthy, strong, looked like themselves, rather than remembering them in their final days
- Talking about them is therapeutic

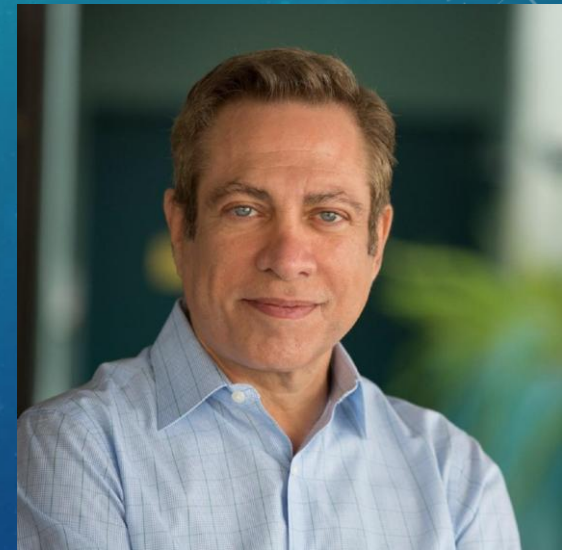


# FINDING MEANING: THE SIXTH STAGE OF GRIEF

"There is no greater gift you can give someone in grief than to ask them about their loved one, and then truly listen."

"This wasn't what my life was supposed to look like, but I faced a decision that everyone faces in grief. Is this just hideous, or can it be part of my son's legacy and meaning that he comes with me to so many cities to help people?"

David Kessler





# PERSONAL AND PUBLIC RITUALS





Rituals: Allow individuals to act, validates physical/affective ventilation, gives a sense of control, provides ongoing sense of connection to loss, allows space to safely confront ambivalent or confused feeling or thoughts, generates social support and offers opportunities to find meaning in the loss (private and public).

Rituals of continuity—doing something to acknowledge the continuing bond. (Making their favorite dish for the holiday)

Rituals of transition—affirm one has entered a new place (mother giving away son's personal belongings to family)

Rituals of reconciliation—ask for/extend forgiveness. Reading a letter to absent father at his gravesite, then burn as an offering

Rituals of affirmation—say thanks

Rituals of intensification—intensifies connection among group members and reinforces common identity. Vietnam War Memorial

- Flowers at grave site
- Decorate place of death
- Visit meaningful place
- Vigils
- Online memorial websites–

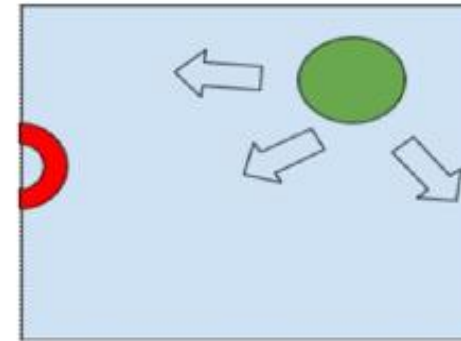
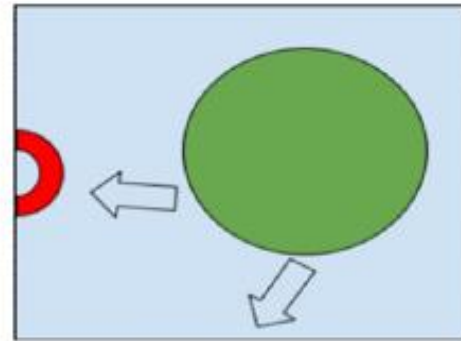
GatheringUs.com  
ForeverMissed.com  
Remembered.com





## The Ball in the Box

(Analogy of Grief as told to Lauren Herschel by her doctor)



When grief is new, it takes up most of the box and hits the pain button over and over again so the pain is fairly constant and seems unrelenting and completely overwhelming.

Over time the ball shrinks a bit, but a song or a memory can trigger the ball and as it bounces against the pain button it still hurts just as much. The ball will shrink at different rates for each person experiencing grief.

As the ball continues to get smaller over time, one can function day to day more easily and you have more time to recover between hits. However the ball can still hit the button randomly and it may be surprising how much it still hurts.



# LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION

May I be free from inner and outer harm and danger. May I be safe and protected.

May I be free of mental suffering or distress.

May I be happy.

May I be free of physical pain and suffering.

May I be healthy and strong.

May I be able to live in this world happily, peacefully, joyfully, with ease.

(Read out loud to hear words of acceptance)

-Jack Kornfield

# Box breathing





As far as I can see, grief will never truly end. It may become softer over time, more gentle, and some days will feel sharp. But grief will last as long as love does— forever. It's simply the way the absence of your loved one manifests in your heart. A deep longing, accompanied by the deepest love. Some days, the heavy fog may return, and the next day, it may recede, once again. It's all an ebb and flow, a constant dance of sorrow and joy, pain and sweet love.

- LEXI BEHRNDT | | TheMindsJournal

MINDJOURNAL

# WORK WITH A GRIEF COUNSELOR/SPECIALIST

- Identifying/expressing emotions
- Validation of emotions/affirmations
- Relaxation techniques
- Identity work–Who was I before loss, during, who am I now, who do I want to be
- Finding purpose/meaning
- Orchestrating social support–“doers, listeners, respite figures”

## Finding Help:

- Community Mental Health–Horizon Health Services–individual, couples, family counseling (Call Admissions Department 716-831-1800)
- Private Therapist–[Psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com), [Betterhelp.com](https://www.betterhelp.com)



# RESOURCES

- <https://www.hospiceandcommunitycare.org/grief-and-loss/grief-links/>
- <https://www.hospicebuffalo.com/our-services/grief-support>
- [WNY Compassion Connection | Emotional Healing and Support Center](#)
- [www.grief.com](http://www.grief.com)
- <https://good-grief.org/resources/>
- <https://www.dougy.org/>
- <https://childrengrieve.org/>
- <https://www.griefshare.org/countries/us/states/ny/cities/buffalo>
- <https://grievingstudents.org/>
- <https://hopeforbereaved.com/>
- [Grief Yoga – The Official Website of Paul Denniston](#)
- [Refuge In Grief – It's OK that You're Not OK](#)
- <https://crisisservices.org/hotlines/>