

Session 1

COMMITMENT TO THE GROUP

Being part of a group is 'work'. It can be very therapeutic work and very rewarding work. You already know: what you get from an experience is directly related to what you put into it. I expect you will significantly enhance your personal growth by being here and by your active participation and 'work' in this safe setting.

Like so many others, you will soon begin to develop a strong commitment to our group process. As you become more comfortable here, you will find the following guidelines are an essential part of that process, serving to make this experience one which is both useful as well as very safe:

ADVICE We are not here to offer advice. We are here to give **DIRECT REPORTS** of our own experiences and feelings. If you have had similar feelings or experiences, let someone know what worked for you, rather than - "**YOU KNOW, IF I WERE YOU I'D...**".

CRYING Crying is both natural and healthy - Tissues was invented for a reason. "In this group, when I am into 'deep feelings' - when my insides are in pain - when my throat is choked up - I give myself permission to cry freely without embarrassment." Here, it is OK for big folks to cry.



RESCUING When you are visibly into feelings, a **RESCUER**, by unsolicited hugs, touching or expressions of comfort, tries to help you stop crying and to "feel better." While a well intentioned rescuer may relieve his or her own feelings of anxiety, you will have been cheated out of a rare opportunity to fully experience and externalize your feelings. We can be far more caring by being attentive listeners.

COMFORT As you have completed experiencing the pain of your own immediate issue, you may not want comfort forced upon you. However it is quite appropriate at any time for you to seek comfort from the group.

TOLERANCE We are not here to judge each other, but to listen and offer understanding. We sometimes find the experiences, expressions and feelings of others to be completely foreign to our own experiences, upbringing or value system. We learn to lovingly accept everything expressed here, as **TOTALLY** legitimate for the person expressing it. We are not here to judge each other, but to listen and offer understanding.

CONFIDENTIALITY The only way that I can feel safe and completely comfortable sharing with you is to be certain that, "**ALL THAT I SAY HERE - WILL STAY HERE**". That means we just **DO NOT** discuss what happens in this room - outside of this room - to anyone - for any reason - even without mentioning names - really, we just don't.



Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness.

It is an emotional, physical, and spiritual necessity, the price you pay for love.

The only cure for grief is to grieve.

-Earl Grollman

What is grief?

It's a natural and normal reaction to loss. You need to go through grief to heal.

Grief can follow many kinds of loss.

The death of a loved one may cause the most intense grief. But grief can also follow other losses, such as:

- A miscarriage
- A divorce or separation
- Learning you have a disability or serious illness
- The death of a pet.
- Loss of a job.

These losses can bring reactions much like those that follow the death of a loved one.

You can use many of the coping strategies in this guidebook if you're dealing with these kinds of loss, too.

Grief can bring a wide range of emotions.

These can range from deep sadness to anger. Some of these feelings may be new or frightening to you. Accepting that these are normal reactions is the first step on your road to healing.

You can find ways to deal with your pain.

There are many healthy ways to cope with grief. You can find ways that work for you. Know that there is plenty of help whenever you need it, too.

What is the difference between grief and mourning?

Grief is an internal experience.

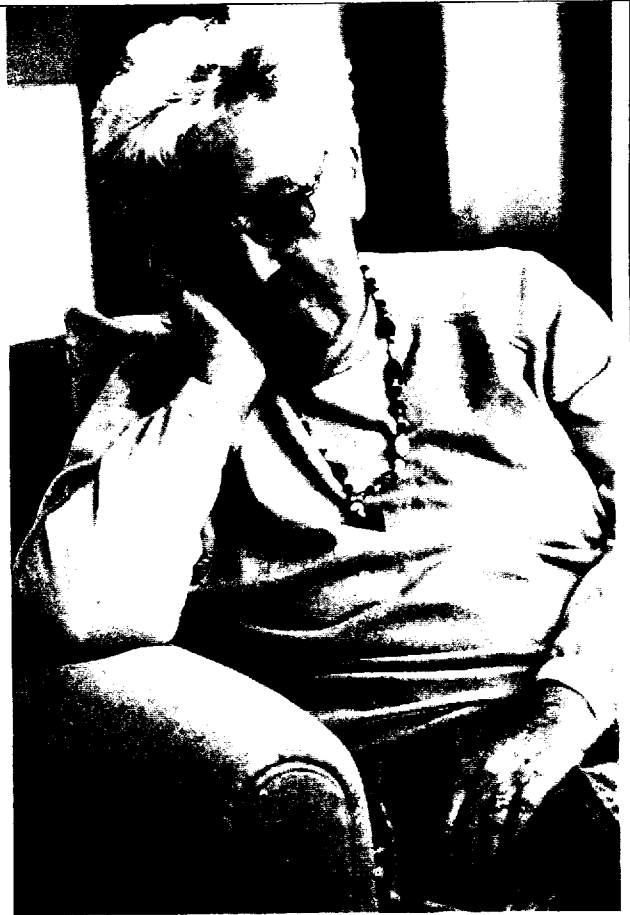
For some, it is an inside emptiness - a fear - panic - loneliness - anger - guilt - longing - depression. When asked this question at a recent session, someone said, "Grief is Love - with no place to go".

Mourning is a bit different. Mourning is 'grief' which is expressed to the outside world.

It is the process where I 'work through' my grief by outwardly expressing my internal feelings.

Grief alone, without mourning, is dangerous and destructive to the human system.

By coming to this group, you are beginning or continuing a healthy process of mourning.



The only people who think there is a time limit for grief, have never lost a piece of their heart.

Take all the time you need.

-unknown



WHEN GROWING UP, WHO TAUGHT US HOW TO MOURN ?

All our lives, most of us have been taught how to acquire, not how to lose. There has been no course called LOSS 101. No wonder it is strange and painful. Many mourn their grief as they witnessed some role model, (perhaps a parent, movie or national personality) handle his or her grief. As young people, we may have heard these messages:

- "Don't feel bad, don't cry."
(message - Bury your feelings)

- "You lost your toy! Well just be good and Santa will bring another."
(message - everything is replaceable)

- "Now! You just keep your feelings to yourself."
(Message - Don't trust, it isn't safe to share your feelings.)

Who taught you how to appropriately express feelings and experience loss?

Everyone grieves differently.

How you grieve may depend on many factors. These include:

The circumstances of the loss

Every loss is hard. But grief may be especially intense, complex, or lengthy if you lost someone very close to you, or if the cause of death is unknown or unusual. For example, grief may be especially hard when the loss is:

- The death of a child, parent, spouse or life partner
- A sudden or violent death
- A death due to suicide.

Personal factors

Gender – Males and females may have been taught different ways to handle stress and emotions. So they may acknowledge and express their grief in different ways.

Age and life experiences-

These can affect your understanding of death and your sense of self when you experience loss.

Culture and faith-

These may influence your beliefs about death and your responses, such as your choice of rituals for honoring someone who has died.

Personality-

Different personality traits (such as being outgoing, shy, expressive or thoughtful) often lead to different ways of coping with loss.

Myths & Facts

Myths about grief can hinder your healing process.

Here are a few:

Myth: The pain of loss will go away faster if you ignore it.

Fact: Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will not make it go away. Instead, facing your grief and dealing with it actively can help bring about true healing.

Myth: Moving on with your life means you are forgetting the one you lost.

Fact: Moving on means you have accepted your loved one's death. That is not the same as forgetting. You can adjust to a new life while always keeping your loved one's memory a part of you.

Myth: It's important to "be strong" in the face of loss.

Fact: Feeling sad, frightened or lonely- or having other similar emotions- is normal reaction to loss. Crying or breaking down does not mean you are weak.

Showing your true feelings helps them and you.

Myth: If you don't cry, it means you are not sorry about the loss.

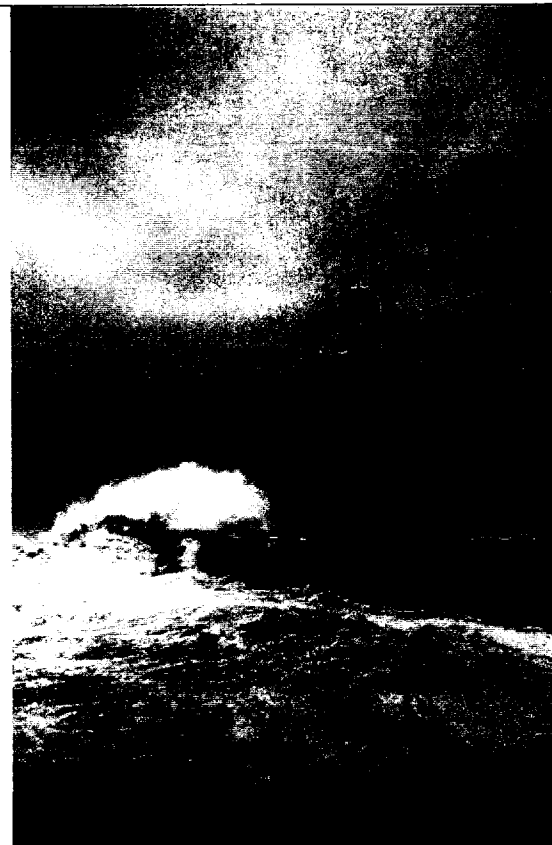
Fact: Crying is a normal response to sorrow, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain of loss just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing or coping with it. They need just as much support and comfort from others.

Myth: Friends can help the mourner by not bringing up the subject of his or her loss.

Fact: People who are grieving usually want and need to talk about their loss- often over and over. Bringing up the topic can give a mourner an opening for talking. But if he or she does not seem to want to talk, do not pry or force conversation.

Myth: Grief should last about a year.

Fact: There is no right time frame for grieving. How long it takes to recover from loss can differ widely from person to person.



Myth: A good way to express sympathy is to say "I know how you feel."

Fact: Everyone feels grief different way. It is probably not possible for anyone to know exactly what another person is going through after a loss.

Myth: Children do not understand grief.

Fact: It is said, "When you are old enough to love, you are old enough to grieve." Children understand loss. They may not process it quite like an adult would nevertheless, they can feel the loss.



GRIEF WRITING

Some Ideas on Keeping a Journal

For the next 6 weeks, you will learn to keep a journal. Whether or not you choose to continue afterwards, I promise that you will find the writing you do while in our group will be rewarding in ways you are unable to fully imagine right now.

Writing is a simple, yet powerful way to begin working through your grief. You will find it helps to relieve some of the physical, emotional and spiritual pain that many grieving folks are experiencing.

- It will help you work through many of the issues which are difficult to communicate in other ways.
- It is very personal and confidential - no one need share in your writings unless you specifically choose to permit it.
- It is simple to do spontaneously.
- It does not require making complicated plans, can be accomplished at the moment while your feelings and needs are strongest, even when you wake up at 3 in the morning.

JOURNAL WRITING IS DIFFERENT - IT IS ONLY FOR YOU TO READ.

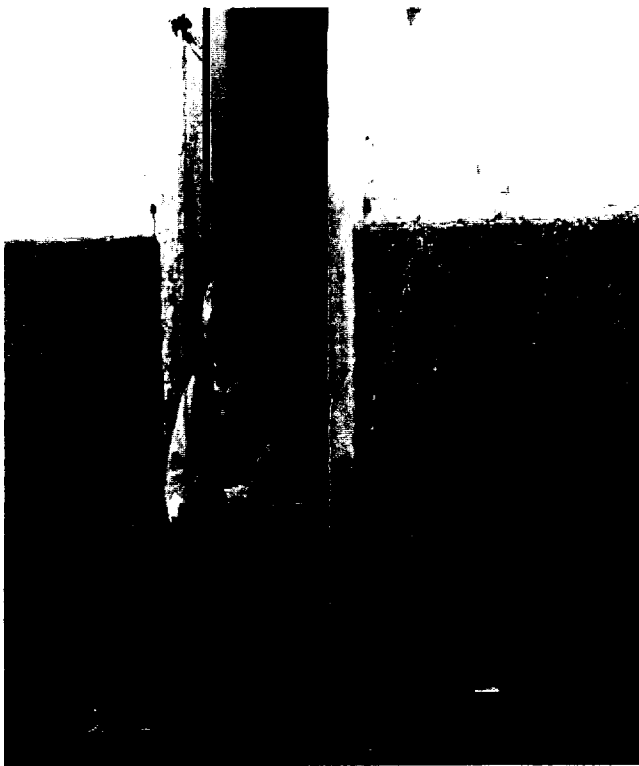
While this sounds like such an obvious thought, you may be surprised at the difficulty in getting your inner self to grant you permission to write freely without ANY editorial judgment. As you progress in your writing, you will find that you are able to overcome the 'mind set' that you are writing for others, and will concentrate on fully serving your needs for expression.

Since you are writing for yourself, you now have permission *not* to be a perfectionist. You can use an old wide lined school notebook, or one of those expensive "designer journals", and can give yourself permission to be as sloppy or as neat as you wish. Forget erasers - it is easier, quicker and more spontaneous to cross out words. Furthermore, there are no errors when writing for yourself - merely thoughts you wish to re-read and those you want to skip. Rather than erasing or tearing out pages in order to obliterate, try putting a big X through a page or crossing out a phrase. Pay attention to those thoughts you are inclined to obliterate - often they are a rich source of issues you need to work through in order to complete your grief work. For this reason, I always suggest a permanently bound notebook rather than a spiral bound or loose leaf book.

In grief work, we are frequently writing for one or more of the following reasons:

To capture our experience or progress, to confront an issue, to vent. Explore or express a feeling or emotion, to connect, to atone, to preserve a thought, or to memorialize our loss.

While few people feel they want to share everything they have written, there is frequently therapeutic value in sharing some of what we have written. Some, in their writings, have discovered parts of themselves which they felt they wanted to share. You are under no obligation to share - however, should you choose to, there will be an opportunity to share during each of our sessions. If writing has always been easy and comfortable - please continue to do it. If this is all new to you, please feel free to ask for help and encouragement as you begin to use this new and useful tool which will serve you well even after you have concluded the largest portion of your grief work.



Common reactions to loss

It's important to be aware of your feelings.

You may find it helps to check off the reactions you had or having.

Not everyone experiences all of these reactions.

Some people have reactions not listed here. And often, reactions that have come and gone return later in the grieving process.

Shock and disbelief

This is a typical first reaction after learning of a loss. It's nature way of protecting you from the impact of the loss for a while. You may:

- ☐ Have trouble believing your loved one is gone
- ☐ Feel numb or like you are on "automatic pilot"
- ☐ Keep expecting your loved one to show up, even though your rational mind knows he or she won't
- ☐ Have a sense of being in a dream

Anger or resentment

This is common, even of there is no one to blame for the death. You may:

- ☐ Feel like a great injustice has been done
- ☐ Be angry at doctors, relatives and others
- ☐ Be angry at your god
- ☐ Resent your loved one for dying and leaving you alone.

Guilt

It's normal to regret things you did or didn't say, do or feel. Some people may regret or feel guilty for:

- ☐ Not doing something(or not doing more) to prevent the death
- ☐ Not being there to say goodbye
- ☐ Being relieved that the person died (for example, in the case of death after a long illness)
- ☐ Having arguments with their loved one while he or she was alive.

Fear or anxiety

A loved one's death can cause you to feel worried, panicky or helpless. You may:

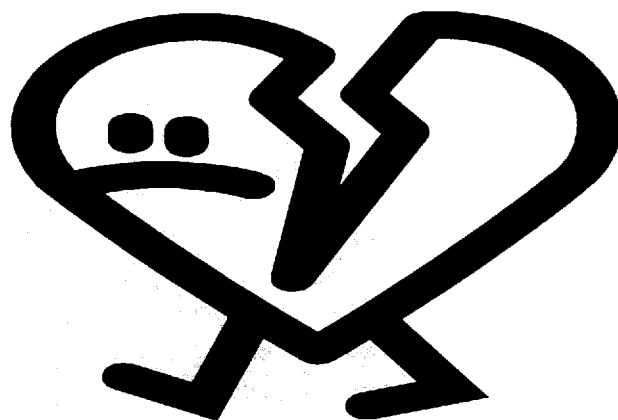
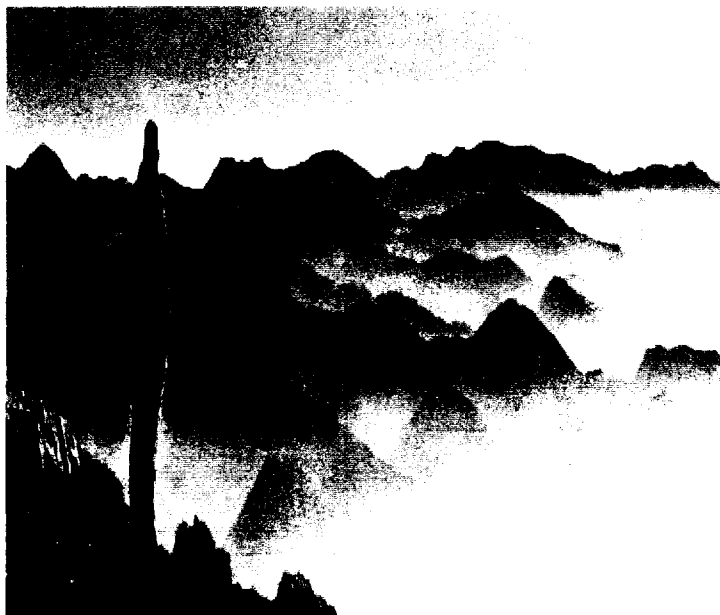
- ☐ Feel unable to handle new responsibilities
- ☐ Worry that you are losing your mind
- ☐ Have fears about your own death
- ☐ Be afraid to face life without your loved one.

Common reactions (continued)

Depression / Deep sadness

Sadness may be a constant presence or hit you all of a sudden. It's common to feel:

- ☐ Lonely
- ☐ Like there's a hole in the center of your life
- ☐ A deep yearning
- ☐ Like you are reliving all the other sadness you have had in your life.



Physical problems

Grief can cause a variety of physical symptoms, including:

- ☐ Weight loss or weight gain
- ☐ Extreme tiredness
- ☐ Trouble sleeping
- ☐ Nausea
- ☐ Being more prone to colds and other illnesses.
- ☐ See your health-care provider for help with any problems. Let him or her know you are going through grief.

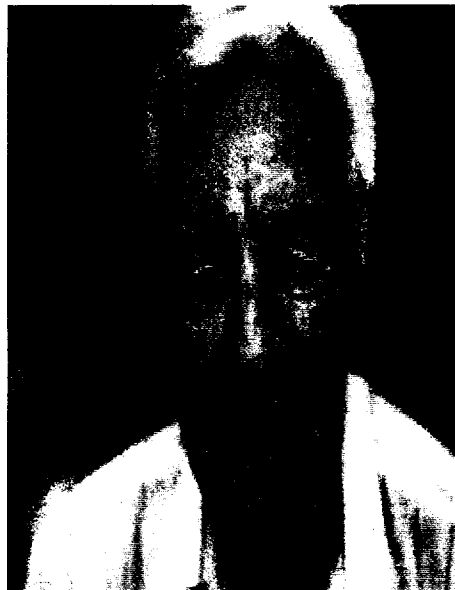
Acceptance / Hope and personal growth

In time, the future begins to look hopeful, even though you may still ache for your loved one now and then.

Working through your grief may have given you new strengths and insights.

You may:

- ☐ Feel that you have more empathy for others
- ☐ Have new confidence on yourself
- ☐ Want to explore new interests and relationships.



Grief Attacks

A "grief attack" is a period of time when you may have intense anxiety and sharp pain.

Triggers for grief attacks:

- ☐ Anniversaries/birthdays
- ☐ Dreams
- ☐ Holidays
- ☐ Alcohol/drugs
- ☐ Empty home/bed
- ☐ Personal belongings
- ☐ Perfumes/colognes
- ☐ Seeing couples/families
- ☐ Children
- ☐ Special places
- ☐ Songs
- ☐ Family reunions
- ☐ Childhood milestones
- ☐ Movies, news, radio

Symptoms:

- ☐ Sadness
- ☐ Loneliness
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Nightmares
- ☐ Lack of interest in activities
- ☐ Crying spells
- ☐ Replaying images in your mind related to your loved one
- ☐ Trouble eating
- ☐ Sleeping problems
- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Stomach upset

Some things to remember:

- Grief attacks are normal.
- Be compassionate to yourself
- Be patient with yourself
- Do not panic-it will pass
- Be open with others

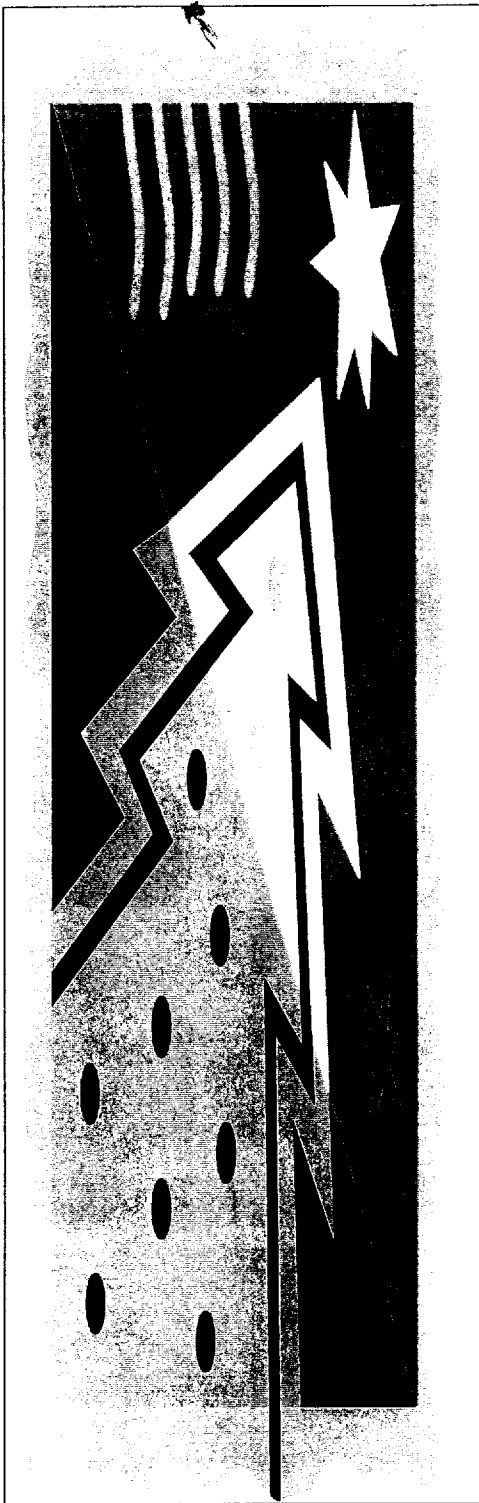
Remember, you have every right to miss the person who has died to feel pain and anxiety.

Tips to cope with grief

Time itself can lessen the intensity of your grief. You can also take measures to cope with anniversaries, special days and other reminders of your loss so that you can continue the healing process, including:

- **Be reassured.** Remember that your reactions are common and normal and that the pain fades as the years pass — although it may never go away completely.
- **Look for healing opportunities.** You might find yourself dreading upcoming special days, fearful of being overwhelmed by painful memories and emotions. In some cases, the anticipation can be worse than the reality. In fact, you may find that you work through some of your grief as you cope with the stress and anxiety of approaching reminders.
- **Reminisce about the relationship you had with the person who died.** Try to focus on the good things about the relationship and the time you had together, rather than the loss.
- **Plan a distraction.** Take a weekend away or plan a visit with friends or relatives.
- **Start a new tradition in your loved one's memory.** For example, make a donation to a charitable organization in the person's name on birthdays or holidays, or plant a tree in honor of your loved one.
- **Tune out.** Limit your exposure to news reports about tragic events if you become more anxious, sad or distressed.
- **Connect with others.** Draw family members and friends close to you, rather than avoiding them. Find someone who encourages you to talk about your loss. Stay connected to your usual support systems, such as spiritual leaders and social groups.
- **Allow yourself to feel sadness and a sense of loss.** But also allow yourself to experience joy and happiness as you celebrate special times. In fact, you might find yourself both laughing and crying.
- **Attend a memorial.** You may find it healing to attend a public memorial service or ceremony that marks the anniversary of tragedies, disasters and other events that claimed lives. These kinds of ceremonies can help draw people together and allow you to share experiences with others who feel similarly.





Coping with holidays and other significant events

But with some planning, you can make these times less upsetting and give them new meaning.

Do not run
from your
grief during
the holidays or
special
occasions.
Learn to face
these moments
with the help
of others.

*“In the light of the
holiday season,
remember the light
your loved one has
brought to your
life.”*

*They who we love and lose are no longer where they were before They are now...
Wherever We Are*

Coping with holidays (continue)



Be patient and realistic.

Sometimes, our own high expectations of the holidays make the pain and frustration more acute. Remember that you are grieving. Be kind and gentle with yourself. Leave the words should and ought to out of the holiday season this year.

Do something special to remember your loved one.

You may want to:

Make or buy a decoration in memory of your loved one.

Ask that a service, reading or song be dedicated to him or her at your place of worship.

Take a trip to a place that was special to you and your loved one.

Help others. For example, spend the day volunteering for a community project.

Look for joy.

Along with the pain this holiday season, try also to remember the wonderful moments of your loved one's life. Think of all the gifts your loved one has given to you—joy, laughter, affection, companionship. Perhaps you will want to write these gifts on strips of paper and place them in a stocking or on a tree.

Adapt cherished traditions.

When loss and grief overwhelm us at the holidays, we are sometimes tempted to scrap the whole thing, to do absolutely nothing. But you can keep traditions alive in ways that make sense given the new reality of your life.

Or

You can stray from tradition if it would help. Nothing says that you have to observe events the way you always have.

Remember, you can always return to your traditions later.

Listen to your heart and know your limits.

Spend some quiet time before the rush of the holidays listening to your heart. Become aware of your needs and express them to family members and friends with whom you plan to spend the holidays. Encourage others to share their feelings, too, so that everyone affected by the death of your loved one has an opportunity to express his or her wishes.

Allow the tears to come.

As you unpack and sift through holiday decorations, understand that along with the warm, loving memories. It is ok to cry.



Let yourself grieve

Grieve in a way that feels natural for you. It's OK to take a longer or shorter time than others to work through your pain. And it's OK to grieve more or less intensely than others.

Allow any feelings and thoughts to come forth.

There's no right or wrong way to feel or think about your loss. Don't be pressured by others' ideas of how you "should" or "have to" be.

Try to express your feelings and thoughts.

For example, you can do this by talking, crying, writing or doing physical activity.

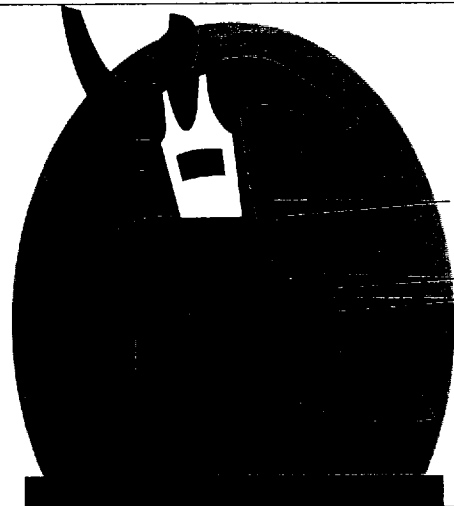
Reach out to people you trust.

This is the time to lean on friends and other supportive people. Look for people who accept your feelings and thoughts, no matter what they are. Often, people want to help but don't know how. Try simply telling them what you need.

Be reassured. Remember that your reactions are common and normal and that the pain fades as the years pass — although it may never go away completely.

Running from Grief

People can easily put off facing the reality of their feelings.



Fact: Many will run from confronting grief for days, weeks, months, or even years.

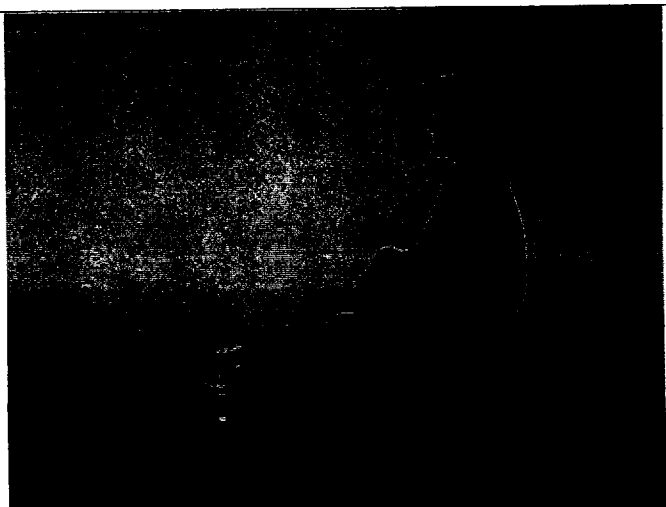
Fact: By not confronting grief, many will suffer physical or emotional meltdown.

How do some run from grief? How are you running from grief?

	Drugs / Alcohol
	Frivolous spending
	Unhealthy relationships
	Excessive Work
	Excessive Travel
	Isolation
	Food
Any others?	

Confronting Grief

By confronting your grief, you will enable yourself to heal.



Fact: Working through grief will shorten the overall length of bereavement.

**Quote: "The way out is the way in."
William Bridges**

How do some confront grief? What has been helpful for you?



Pictures, scrapbooks, memory boxes, videos



Grief writing, journals, diaries



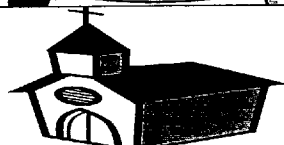
Visit the gravesite, memorials



Work through your loved one's belongings.

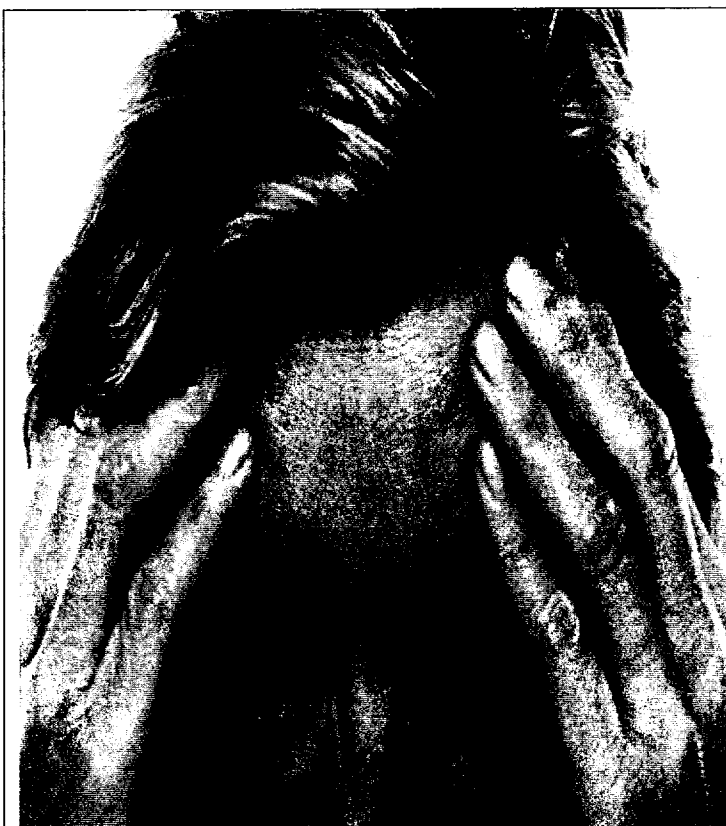


Support groups, friends, family...etc



Spiritual support

Any others?



Know about complicated grief.

**People who have extreme
trouble working through
grief may have
“complicated grief.”**

In complicated grief:

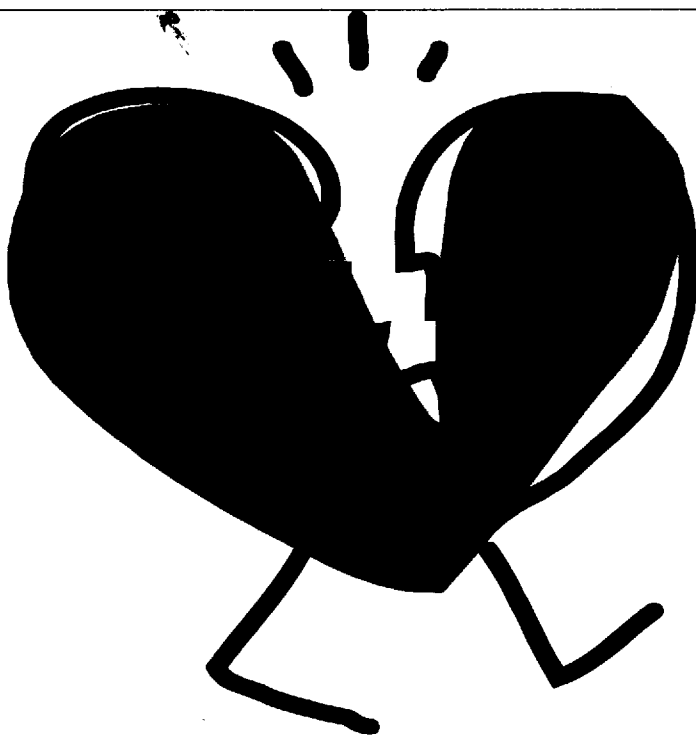
- ⇒ a person's reactions to a death harm his or her ability to work, get along with others or do other things.**
- ⇒ that harm goes on for months.**

Complicated grief can go on for years and lead other problems, including:

- ⇒ problems at work or with relationships**
- ⇒ alcohol and other drug problems**
- ⇒ physical or mental health problems**
- ⇒ increased risk of suicide.**

The reactions can include:

- ⇒ an inability to believe or accept the death**
- ⇒ excessive anger about the death**
- ⇒ feeling numb or detached**
- ⇒ a lost sense of security**
- ⇒ searching for, intense yearning for, or intrusive thoughts about the person who died**
- ⇒ taking on the behaviors or symptoms of the person who died.**



Complicated grief (continue)

Complicated grief can be similar to depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. But it may require different treatments.

Talk to a qualified physical or mental health-care provider:

- ⇒if your grief is making it hard to function-especially months after your loss**
- ⇒if you have any questions about your healing process.**

Are you at risk?

- ⇒Have a history of depression or other mental health problems**
- ⇒Have other major losses or stresses in their lives**
- ⇒Were very dependent on or close to the person they lost**
- ⇒Lost someone suddenly or violently**

If you can identify any risk factors, be extra alert for signs of complicated grief. Be sure to seek additional help.

Depression

Deep sadness and feeling depressed for a while are normal after a loss. But lasting depression is a cause for concern.



Some warning signs are listed below.

- ⇒ difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- ⇒ fatigue and decreased energy
- ⇒ feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness
- ⇒ feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- ⇒ insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- ⇒ irritability, restlessness
- ⇒ loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- ⇒ overeating or appetite loss
- ⇒ persistent aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems that do not ease even with treatment
- ⇒ persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings
- ⇒ thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts

How are symptoms of depression treated?

If a physical cause for the symptoms of depression is ruled out, your doctor may refer you to a psychologist, psychiatrist, or psychopharmacologist for a psychological evaluation and treatment. This mental health specialist will determine the best course of treatment. That treatment may include antidepressants, psychotherapy, or a combination of both.

When should I seek help for symptoms of depression?

If symptoms of depression are negatively affecting your life -- such as causing difficulties with relationships or work issues or causing family disputes -- and there isn't a clear solution to these problems, then you should seek help. Talking with a mental health counselor or health care professional can help prevent things from getting worse, especially if these symptoms of depression persist for any length of time.

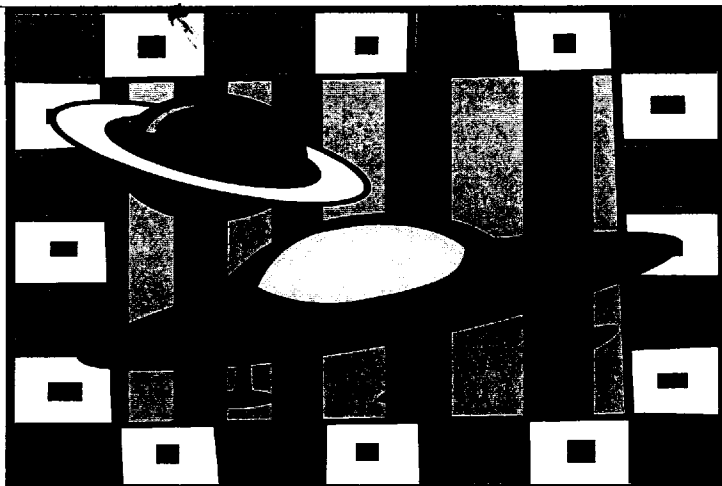
Remember: Depression is a medical condition that needs treatment.

If you have any thoughts of suicide, call 9-1-1 right away.

Or call:

the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255



Close Encounter of the Third Kind

Elements of loss can seem bizarre or even strange at times, but remember, it is very normal.

Altered State of Time ➤ Slow or fast ➤ Past or future frozen in place ➤ Lose track of what day or even month it is	Obsessive Review or Ruminating ➤ Obsessive review and ruminating are psychological terms used for describing how you may repeat the circumstances about death or stories about the person who has had died.
Altered State of Mind ➤ Feelings of emotional detachment ➤ Feelings of panic ➤ Fantasy in dying ➤ Day dreaming	Altered State of Behavior ➤ Excessive anger or hostility ➤ Extreme co-dependent tendencies ➤ Emotionless / Robotic – like behaviors
Dreams ➤ Nightmares ➤ Heart-warming dreams	Unexplained Phenomenon ➤ Seeing visions of your loved one ➤ Smelling familiar colognes or perfumes ➤ Hearing their voice or crying out
Loss of Intimacy ➤ In losing a life partner, you also lose hugging, kissing, physical touch, or intercourse. ➤ Warm moments with others may trigger grief attacks. ➤ Romantic moments, movies, dinners, vacations, holidays...etc.	Phobias ➤ Death ➤ Doctors, Hospitals ➤ Funeral Homes ➤ Cemeteries ➤ Sickness, germs,...etc. ➤ Fear of those things related to your loss
Searching for Meaning ➤ You may find yourself asking a lot of questions. Hard and difficult questions. Whatever the nature or number of your questions, asking them is normal part of your grief journey. ➤ Be aware that people may discourage you from asking questions, or worse yet, watch out for people who attempt to give pat responses. Many do not find comfort in pat answers. You're asking hard questions, but sometimes you know within that you will not get an answer. You simply want and need to ask it aloud. ➤ Everyone here has an opportunity to ask a question. What is one question you would like to ask if you were able to get an answer for it?	



Other Steps to Help You Heal

Keep memories alive.

- Make a scrapbook of photos and other mementos of the life you shared with your loved one
- Keep some things that belonged to him or her
- Imagine talking with your loved one from time to time
- Recall good times you had with him or her
- Share memories with friends and family

Think about continuing a project your loved one started.

For example, consider completing something your loved one was building, continuing his or her volunteer work, even carrying on his or her business, if appropriate. This can also help put to rest any feelings of things left unfinished.

Look to your faith.

- You may find comfort in religious ceremonies, prayer, meditation, or activities at your place of worship.
- Seek guidance and counsel from your spiritual leader

Try to put off major decisions.

- Wait a while before making major changes such as moving, remarrying or changing jobs.
- Everyone needs time to adjust before knowing whether these changes will be good for you.

Think about helping others.

- You can give your time or money to a cause or charity that would be meaningful to your loved one.
 - A hospital or hospice
 - Children's organization
- An organization that works to prevent a disease or educate people about it.
- An organization dedicated to something that was important to your loved one.

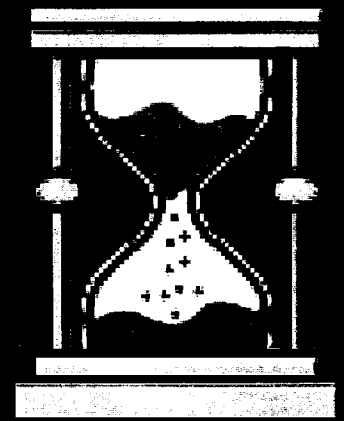
Allow yourself to move on.

In time, you may find yourself ready for new interests and relationships. (Remember, moving on with your life does not mean you are forgetting your loved one.)

It's OK to take time for yourself- to laugh or do something you enjoy.

Changing Perspectives

In time, your outlook on life will be much different than it is today and it will be good.



We have all heard the cliché - Time Heals. Well we know that the mere passage of time just doesn't make it suddenly "all right".

We know that from moment to moment we are never quite the same. The experience of each moment changes our outlook on the next moment

The changing of perspective can work for you, once you realize and accept that the world is never static.

Staying Up Late Analogy

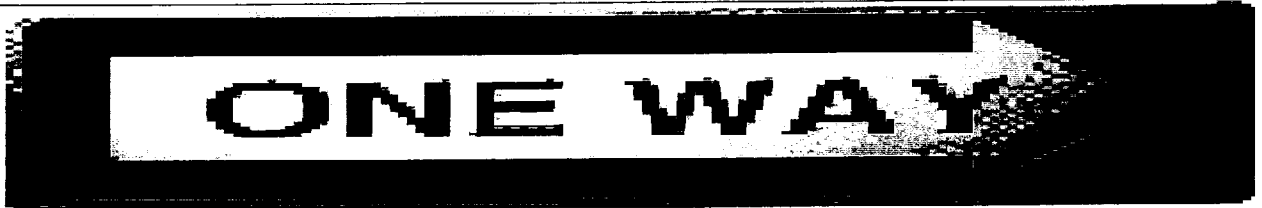
When I was a child, I loved staying up late. I was certain that when I grew up and could do anything I wanted. I would stay up late all the time if I wanted to. Being older now...my perspective has now changed.

Continue the Grief Work

The work is done until
you say it is done.



- ☒ Continue to effectively experience and express outside of yourself, the reality of the death.
- ☒ Continue to fully embrace the pain of the loss, while learning how to assure that you are nurtured, physically, emotionally and spiritually.
- ☒ Continue to convert your relationship with the person who died from one of interactive presence to one of appropriate memory.
- ☒ Continue to develop a new self-identity based on a life without the person who died.
- ☒ Continue to relate the experience of the death to a context of new meaning in your life.
- ☒ Continue a lasting network of support to help you through the process.



Where do we go from here?

- ☐ Some need alone time for reflection and integration.
- ☐ Some need to continue some sort of group contact.
- ☐ Some may need professional social or psychological support.
- ☐ Some may need additional individual intensive work in expressing grief.
- ☐ Each person needs to work out a plan for his/herself.

“WHAT I NEED “

- TIME** Time alone; and time with others whom I can trust and who will listen when I need to talk. Months and years of time to feel and understand the feelings which go along with loss.
- REST** I may need extra amounts of things I needed before. Relaxation, exercise, nourishment, diversion, hot baths, afternoon naps, a trip, a cause to work for to help others, any of these may give me a lift. Grief is an emotionally exhausting process. I need to replenish myself - to follow what feels healing and what connects me to the people and things I love.
- SECURITY** I need to reduce, or find help for financial or other stresses in my life. I need to allow myself to be close to ones I can trust. It helps when I allow myself to get back into a routine, and to do things at my own pace.
- HOPE** I find hope and comfort from those who have experienced a similar loss. Knowing some things that helped them, and realizing that they have recovered and that time does help, gives me hope that sometime in the future my grief will be less raw and less painful.
- CARING** I try to allow myself to accept the expressions of caring from others, even though they may be uneasy and awkward. Helping a friend or relative also suffering from the same loss often brings me a feeling of closeness with that person.
- GOALS** It often feels that much of life is without meaning. At times like these, small goals are helpful. Something to look forward to, like visits with family or friends, a movie tomorrow night, a trip next month, helps me get through the time in the immediate future. Living one day at a time is a good rule of thumb. At first, my enjoyment of these things just isn't the same. I know this is normal. As time passes, I will need to work on some longer range goals to give some structure and direction to my life. It is OK to get some guidance or counseling to help with this.
- SMALL PLEASURE** I no longer underestimate the healing effects of small pleasures. Sunsets, a walk in the woods, a favorite food - all are small steps toward regaining my pleasure in life itself.
- BACK- SLIDING** Sometimes after a period of feeling good, I find myself back in the old feelings of extreme sadness, despair or anger. Intellectually, I know this is often the nature of grief, up and down, and it may happen over and over for a time. I'm told, this is because as humans, we cannot take in all of the pain and the meaning of death all at once. So, I give myself permission to let it in a little at a time.

The only way OUT is THROUGH.