



Loss and Grief

We are never ready to lose a loved one. It's always a shock. Even if our loved one is terminal and we know time is short, it is still not expected the moment death happens. Maybe tomorrow or next week but not at this moment.

Everyone grieves differently. No two people grieve the same. Some are very emotional. Some don't show emotion, but it doesn't mean they are not grieving inside. It is important not to think someone does not care because they are not showing outward emotion. We need to focus on our grief over our loss.

Death produces a wide range of emotions, all of which are normal and natural. Whether you are grieving, or someone you know is, it is important to understand what is normal. Everyone grieving will experience some or all of the below, and to different degrees of intensity. They are not right or wrong. They just are. And the best way to begin the journey to healing, is to let them be and feel them, for as long as you need. It is helpful to be able to name your feelings and share them with someone that you trust, a friend, a pastor, a counselor.

Anger

Anger may be directed toward friend, relatives, medical personnel, first responders, your loved one for leaving you, or even yourself. You play through multiple "If I only..." scenarios.

Suggestions:

It is helpful to find a way to vent your feelings.

Talk through it with someone you trust.

Write about your feelings, describe them, and their intensity.

Use a punching bag, run, or involve yourself in physical activity

Anxiety/Fear

You are vulnerable. You may have lost your security, maybe your financial means sense of purpose or belonging. This may leave you feeling anxious, or fearful of the unknown road ahead.

Suggestions:

Share your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust.

Writing about them can help but then it is important to share what you have written with someone.

Guilt/Regret

You play through multiple "If I only..." scenarios. Your mind brings up things said or not said. May feel guilty. But remember Guilt is triggered by intentionally doing harm. Regret is wishing you had done something differently or expressed yourself more lovingly.



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Suggestions:

For guilt, write a letter to your lost loved one to apologize

Ask forgiveness of other people

Forgive yourself

For Regret, determine what changes you might make to avoid regret in the future

Relief

This is a common emotion when someone has been ill and suffering for a long time. It is especially normal when you have been the caregiver for a long time. It's okay to feel relief. It doesn't mean you haven't loved, or don't love. Give yourself permission to feel, whatever the emotion might be.

Other Common Emotions

Everyone may feel different emotions. There is no emotion that is wrong or out of place. But take some time to ponder your emotions and why you might be feeling them. Write about them or share them with someone you trust won't judge you, lest you misdirect them to someone else and cause further pain, for them and for you. Consider a grief support group. It is a wonderful environment for sharing, knowing those you are sharing your pain and emptiness with, have experienced similar feelings from their losses.

Physical Impact

Grief not only affects us emotionally but can affect us physically as well. Confusion, Forgetfulness, Numbness, Mood swings, depression are just as normal. Emotions drain us and can affect our physical bodies trying to adapt. It is common to experience headaches, stomach/intestinal issues, tightness in our muscles, fatigue, hallucinations. Stress, sleeplessness, loss of appetite and dehydration, all normal, can seriously affect our bodies and our health. So, it is important to take care of yourself.

Grief is a journey and takes time. There is no set time that grief eases or disappears. It is different for everyone. Take as much time as you need, regardless of judgements of others.

The emotions of grief will come and go the rest of your life, but the intensity of your feelings will decrease as you adjust to your new normal.

Helpful Resources:

Practical Suggestions:

<https://tipsandiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Dealing-with-Loss-Grief-Practical-Suggestions.pdf>

Learn a healthy grieving process:

<https://cnvdetox.com/resources/understanding-grief/>

Understanding your grief: Hope for the Holidays:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N32kzjlk3C8>



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Grief Anonymous

<https://ww38.griefanonymous.com/attend-meeting.html>

Kaiser Permanente Grief Support Groups

https://homecare-scal.kaiserpermanente.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/San-Diego-Bereavement-Group-Flyer_12.23.pdf

Care at Home Grief Support

<https://homecare-scal.kaiserpermanente.org/hospice/bereavement-support/>

Catholic Grief and Bereavement support groups are offered at several of our local Catholic churches twice a year. The closest is Santa Sophia, St Therese, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Grief support groups are also available for specific kinds of loss – death by homicide, death by overdose, death by suicide, loss of an infant, loss of a spouse, abortion and pregnancy loss, loss of a pet, etc. See pages for specific types of loss for these resources.

Complicated Grief – Grief after violent deaths or grief that lasts more than a year can require specialized help.

16-week (16-session) Complicated Grief Workshop—often referred to as Prolonged Grief Treatment (PGT) or Complicated Grief Therapy (CGT)—is a structured, evidence-based program designed to help individuals move through intense, "stuck" grief. Developed by experts at the Columbia University Center for Prolonged Grief, this approach is designed to treat prolonged grief disorder.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5735848/>

Program Structure (16 Sessions)

The 16-session protocol is divided into specific phases, focusing on understanding grief, processing the loss, and restoring a life of meaning:

- **Sessions 1–3 (Foundations):** Intake, history taking, psychoeducation, and setting goals.
- **Sessions 4–9 (Processing):** Imaginal and situational revisiting procedures to work through painful memories and avoidance behaviors.
- **Session 10 (Review):** A midcourse review of progress.
- **Sessions 11–16 (Integration):** An "imaginal conversation" with the deceased, followed by closing/consolidation of treatment.

Key Components

- **Grief Monitoring:** Using a diary to manage emotional pain.
- **Targeted Exercises:** Addressing "stuck" points in the grief process.
- ****Revisiting:** A technique where clients tell the story of the death to reduce the impact of painful memories.
- **Future Planning:** Strengthening relationships and connecting with memories.



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Availability and Training

- **For Individuals:** The Center for Loss and Renewal in NYC offers this 16-week protocol.
- **For Professionals:** The Columbia School of Social Work provides training workshops on these methods, including online options and CE hours.
- **Manual:** A 16-session treatment manual is available.

<https://prolongedgrief.columbia.edu/training/>

This approach is highly effective for treating grief that persists for more than a year and disrupts daily functioning.

Faith based Reboot recovery group - separate groups for individuals, first responders, military

<https://rebootrecovery.com/en/trauma>

For more resources, support groups or Catholic therapists contact Rich at hello@thechurchofstluke.org