

What is Grief?

Grief is a full range of emotions, thoughts and experiences one may endure when someone they love dies. It is important to recognize that this may entail a wide variety of emotions and experiences. Some of these may be experienced as “positive”, such as relief from the end of their loved one’s suffering during a prolonged illness or moments of happiness recalling certain events. A majority of these emotions may naturally be experienced as “negative”, such as sadness, loneliness, anger or regret. Some may be more complicated and interrelated such as feeling guilty for experiencing relief. Grief may trigger responses that are physical, cognitive, behavioral, emotional or spiritual in nature.

What are some of the emotions, thoughts and experiences you have noticed in your grief? (Remember to try to notice both “positive” and “negative” emotions)

Are there specific times of the day, events or other things which regularly trigger these emotions and experiences?

What is Mourning?

Mourning is the outward expression of the emotions and thoughts related to grief. Most individuals who suffer the loss of a loved one will grieve, but not all will externalize their grief. To mourn is to release those emotions in order to allow for healing. This release can be through emoting (crying, etc.), talking, writing, physical activities (running, exercise, etc.) or any other healthy method of release.

What are some of the ways you express your emotions and thoughts in grief?

Who do you tend to express them to and how do they react?

What has helped you to get through emotionally difficult times in the past?

Do you have ways to express your thoughts and feelings through creating (art, music, knitting etc.) or writing (journaling, short stories, poetry, etc.)?

Do you use any other activities to release your emotions (exercise, etc.)?



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A Bereavement Awareness and Support Community (BAASC) Initiative Component

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You are not alone.

Grief can be described as being a rational and natural response to the loss of a loved one. There is no universal, predetermined set of expectations, needs or time constraints which will occur or be “appropriate” during grief. Every individual’s grieving process will be as unique as their relationship with their loved one and will be influenced by a wide variety of factors including previous losses, family styles of verbal and emotional communication, personal perspectives surrounding life and death, other life circumstances and stressors, mental health and wellness factors, etc.

Spirituality and Bereavement

It is not at all uncommon to experience spiritual crises during bereavement. Anger is common during grief and can be directed towards oneself or another person, the medical community, etc. Anger is a common human emotion within any relationship; parent, sibling, spouse or otherwise. One's relationship with their Higher Power is no different. Just as one's attachments and relationships are closely linked to their emotions, experiences and well-being throughout their lives, these same attachments and relationships may play a fundamental role within grief. Grief is a physically based response to the loss of a loved one and can manifest within all the main dimensions of one's being (i.e. cognitive, emotional, physical, social, spiritual, etc.). Losses within the physical world can devastate someone despite all eternal promises and spiritual paradigms. One can know their loved one is with their Higher Power and in a promised place but still ache and long to have an active physical attachment and relationship with him/her in the here and now. Expressing anger towards one's Higher Power is not necessarily representative of a renouncement or rejection. It is important to explore and honor every aspect of grief, including conflicts within one's spiritual dimension. Validation and normalization are primary in bereavement support and are best cultivated through active and compassionate listening and encouragement to experience all of one's natural responses to grief.

Spirituality and faith can be a tremendous resource during difficult times and provide guidance and comfort in the face of despair and tribulation. Some individuals may first need to work through the emotionality of the physical loss before they can again focus on their loved one's spiritual gain.

What is needed during Bereavement?

Support during bereavement should provide an opportunity to put words to what is being experienced and to explore and reflect on these emotions and thoughts. Appropriate goals could include skill acquisition surrounding being able to tell others how they are struggling and/or how they can be supported during these difficult times. Other skills to minimize the extent of experienced heightened emotional states and the effect of these current challenges on their daily lives to whatever extent possible can also be focused on. Most importantly, support is meant to allow grievers an opportunity to physically process, release and replace emotionally significant memories, traumas and losses. This explicitly should not be confused with releasing the emotional attachment of their loved

What is Bereavement?

Bereavement is the state of grief and a time of mourning after a loss, generally referring to the loss of a loved one through death. Bereavement work involves the truthful and honest experiencing of the full range of emotions which occur during one's grieving process. The terms "positive" and "negative" used as adjectives to describe emotions appear in quotations because emotions are not actually "good" or "bad"; "right" or "wrong". They are often experienced in that manner based upon whether they are perceived as being "pleasurable" or "painful", "appropriate" and "ideal" or "inappropriate" and "imperfect". Explicitly, emotions should not be viewed or labeled with such terms as they are physically based experiences. Our method of expression or coping, however, may be viewed as maladaptive if expressed in a manner which is actively harmful to yourself or to others, such as self-medication through substance use or making verbal, physical threats against oneself or others.

Every individual's grieving process will be as unique as their relationship with their loved one. Their family, friends and neighbors will all grieve differently and may not necessarily recognize the importance of being able to grieve in one's own way. The amount of time needed for grieving varies with each individual and the nature of their loss. Sometimes, even with the best of intentions, attempts at offering comfort and/or advice can actually hurt more than help.

Have you had any experiences where you felt you were misunderstood or were not receiving the support you need?

What do you feel you would need in order to feel supported during this time?

Who in your personal life do you feel may be able to offer you that support?

Love remains long after grief.

one and the substance of those memories and relationships. Memories, emotions and grief are physiologically based mechanisms.

Love remains long after grief. This should be thoroughly explored and discussed. This is the purpose of memorialization, to allow the bereaved to maintain an ongoing connection with and to honor their loved one in a meaningful way. Processing grief allows one to retain the substance of the memories while reducing the acute emotional response produced by reflecting on them.