



The Grieving Journey

from Greene County Council on Aging Summer 2022

Phases of Grief

I. Shock and numbness (*During the first few weeks*) There is a sense of disbelief, feeling as though frozen in time, going through the motions. Confusion, anxiety, restlessness, feelings of helplessness are common. Some somatic symptoms can occur, such as pain in the heart or gut, or insomnia. Many people rely on spiritual resources. Questioning the meaning of life, death, and God are also normal. Practical assistance with food, errands, etc., is very helpful at this time.

II. Disorganization (*During the first year*) There are two stages within this phase. During the first four months, the reality of the death starts to set in. Feeling vulnerable and oversensitive is common. There is often yearning or searching for the deceased as if the death was all a dream. It is common to feel mixed up. There is a need to think about and retell the story of the loss. There may be feelings of anger, guilt, frustration. Emotional pain and a lack of energy often occur. It is important to practice self-care at this time. Toward the end of this phase (fourth to ninth month) there is often withdrawal and depression signaling that inner grief work is being done. If inner work can be successfully worked through in this stage then there will be movement toward change, growth, and new life.

III. Reorganization (*Usually from 12 – 24 months or longer*) This is usually the turning point toward new life. Memories are less painful and more cherished. There are moments of despair and disorganization mixed with peacefulness and new energy. The survivor needs affirmation as they take on new roles and activities. Some may find reorganization too difficult and may avoid the task resulting in complicated grief.

IV. Recovery Eventually, feeling capable of living without the deceased, accepting the events of life, affirming the self, assuming responsibilities again. There is renewed interest in things, and eagerness to live and move forward.



The Grieving Journey is a Greene County Council on Aging quarterly publication to accompany you in your time of bereavement after the loss of a significant person in your life.

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Thinking Back

After my husband died, I replayed his last days and dying day over and over in my mind - this went on for a long time. Sometimes I wanted to review the events and sometimes I didn't, but I had no control over how often I ran through the days and hours prior to his death, the thoughts just started without consciously thinking of him, sometimes they felt intrusive. I even replayed what had happened immediately following his death, who was there, what they said or did, etc. Thinking back, I have done this after each significant person in my life died – my parents and siblings – but I did it more after my husband died.

I think the reason this replaying of events happens is so that, little by little, we permit ourselves to take in the loss. The death of a loved one can be so incredibly painful that it is hard for us to accept the entirety of the loss right away. So, our brain does this kind thing of allowing us to accept the event in smaller bits and pieces by replaying the days before and the moment of death – this is very much like the function of denial. Each time we review the event we accept, a little bit more, the fact that our loved one is gone (“how could this be?” we ask ourselves repeatedly) and isn't coming back. This process can take a short time or a long time.

If you are experiencing this replaying phenomenon, know that the reviewing is helping you even when it makes you feel sad and emotional. It is allowing you to internalize an enormous loss and life changing event at a pace that your psyche can handle. So be kind to yourself. You aren't back sliding, you are doing grief work, and it's a difficult and an emotional task.

I Share With You the Agony of Your Grief

I share with you the agony of your grief,
The anguish of your heart finds echo in my own.

I know I cannot enter all you feel
Nor bear with you the burden of your pain;

I can but offer what my love does give:

The strength of caring,
the warmth of one who seeks to understand,
The silent storm-swept barrenness of so great a loss,

This I do in quiet ways,
That on your lonely path You may not walk alone.

Howard Thurman in "Meditations of the Heart"



GCCOA Grief Support Group

Group meetings are open to all those who have lost a loved one. Meetings are on the second Monday of each month from 10am until noon at the Peace Lutheran Church, 3530 Dayton Xenia Road, Beavercreek (lower level). Participation is limited and advance registration is required. Please call the Council to learn more.

We hope you find this publication helpful, and welcome your comments and ideas for future issues.
Let us know if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter.