



### 6 Sources of “Complication” in Grieving: (*obstructing its progress*)

1. Multiple deaths in a relatively short time
2. Unresolved relationship issues (or conflict) with the deceased person
3. The body of the loved one cannot be found
4. The presence of other consequent or subsequent major losses (loss of home/shelter and basic needs such as clothing and food, loss of job or local work opportunity, loss of support such as through large scale destruction of a community)
5. Unresolved guilt related to the person’s death: “I should have/shouldn’t have \_\_\_” “If only I had \_\_\_, maybe \_\_\_ would still be alive.”
6. Negative assumptions about why the person died “God must be punishing me for something.” Why me? Why was my loved one taken, while others are alive? (If self-blame is assumed, then grieving is usually obstructed.)



### What’s Normal?

There are many reactions to a significant loss. We each grieve in our own way. Our sadness and symptoms may appear and disappear, may occur in any order, may vary in intensity from day to day, and often occur when we least expect them. Grief responses may surface or resurface long after the initial loss has occurred. Grief is one of the most natural, yet painful, of human emotions and *does not* always run a predictable course. For those closest to the diseased, grief often endures longer than others anticipate.

### (Common Responses - *continued*)

#### Emptiness/Numbness:

❖ *Things to try:* Do something concrete; for example, make a photo album, draw or paint a picture, write a letter.

Re-incorporation challenges: Trouble returning to your daily tasks and routines.

You may have difficulty with:

- Taking care of simple but essential household or work related responsibilities
- Re-engaging in or envisioning your future
- Learning to live without the one lost

❖ *Things to try:* Start with a half-day at work if possible. Decision making may be difficult for a while. Ask friends, loved ones, or an advisor to brainstorm with you the decisions you’re facing. Don’t rush to make ANY big decisions.

# UNDERSTANDING GRIEF



## ❖ GRIEVING ❖

- The Most Common Tasks or Phases of Grief
- Common Grief Responses
- “Things to try” or do that may help you while grieving
- Complications that may alter or intensify your grief challenges

“GRIEF IS NEITHER A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED,  
NOR AN ILLNESS TO BE OVERCOME.  
IT IS A SACRED EXPRESSION OF LOVE...  
A SACRED SORROW.”

- GERALD MAY, M.D.





### **Most Common Tasks or Phases of Grieving**

*(Remember, every person's experience is unique. Some of these "phases" may last for only a few minutes, or for many months. Some last for years. It is a PROCESS, not simply "steps" one must take. Often these phases may overlap.)*

1. *Shock, panic, numbness (May include denial, or even brief resistance to accepting the reality of the loss)*
2. *Accepting the reality of the loss*
3. *Struggling with the pain of the loss (while more fully recognizing the breadth of the loss and its significance and meaning)*
4. *Adjusting to life without the lost loved one(s)*
5. *Accepting this new life (while placing the loved one(s) in their proper place in this new life), and moving forward to forge out a revised positive plan for the future.*



# Common Grief Responses

**Shock/Disbelief:** Allows you to let in feelings as you are able to deal with them and prevents you from being overwhelmed. It's normal. You may feel:

- Dazed, hoping it was just a bad dream.
- Intense emotional outbursts or physical reactions/ailments

❖ **Things to try:** Talk with persons you trust, rest, and avoid expecting too much from yourself.

**Searching/Yearning:** Struggling with the reality of the loss. You may experience:

- Emotional ups and downs
- Difficulty in completing tasks
- Difficulty concentrating, restlessness
- Thinking you've heard his/her voice, or seen the person in a crowd

❖ **Things to try:** Reschedule projects, exercise, talk to someone who has been through it, or talk to a counselor.

**Anxiety/Panic:** Feeling overwhelmed by the intensity of pain. You may feel:

- Out of control, wanting more control
- Aware of your own mortality
- Life is too unpredictable
- Fearful, "Will something else happen?"
- Over protectiveness of others

❖ **Things to try:** Avoid impulsive decisions. Spend time with people you care about. Nurture your faith in God. Spend time outdoors. Learn to relax. Seek medical/counseling assistance.

### **Intense Sadness / Waves of Emotion:**

You may feel:

- Emotionally overwhelmed, often at unexpected times, with either sadness or powerful waves of mixed emotion.
- Aimless, alone, estranged from others

❖ **Things to try:** Talk to others. Avoid extended periods alone. Get outside and involved in physical activity. Remember, this is especially common, and normal. The intensity, frequency, and duration of these episodes will usually decrease over time.

**Anger/Rage** at the loss. It may cause:

- Anger directed at the deceased, circumstances, medical/rescue workers, God
  - Feelings of abandonment
  - Bouts of crying, impatience, irritability
- ❖ **Things to try:** Exercise, physical activity, and journal writing. Ask yourself if the deceased would want you to carry this anger (or respond in ways that will risk further loss and pain to your children or family).

**Guilt/Regret:** Struggling with our powerlessness over the situation.

You may experience:

- "If only I had. . .tried harder, gone sooner, spent more time, not. . ."
- Blaming, looking for who was at fault
- Guilt at surviving
- Unresolved conflict in your relationship with the one(s) who died

❖ **Things to try:** Be forgiving. Ask what the deceased would now tell you.

### **Numbness, emotional emptiness**

Sometimes you may not feel anything at all, and it can become a bit unnerving, as you wonder why. Don't assume the worst about yourself or assume you're a hard-hearted or callous person. It may take time for you to acknowledge further how your loved one's absence is affecting your life. Try talking with a friend about your loved one's influence.

**If you need to talk more, please call me at (501) 574-8681 -Dan Jarboe**